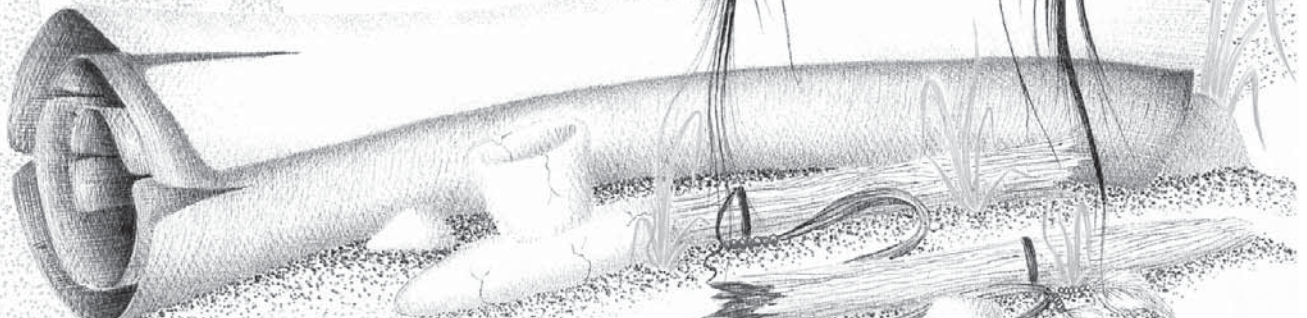
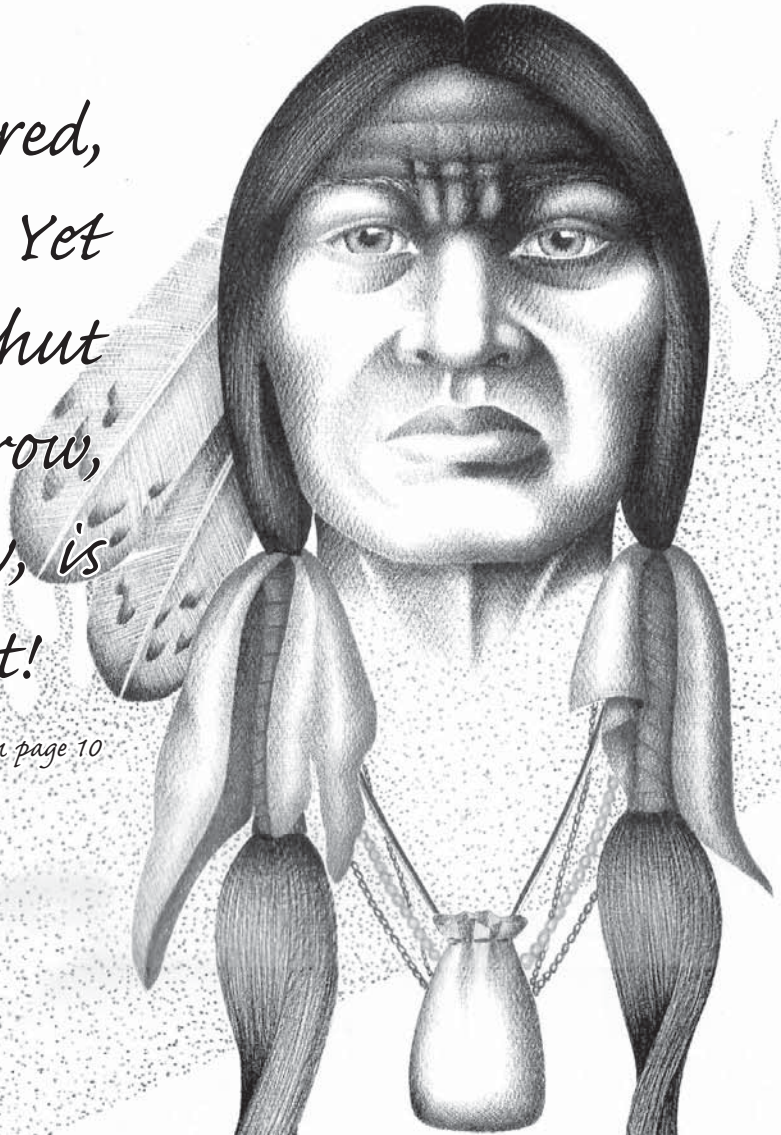


*I am extremely tired,
my eyes are heavy. Yet
they never seem to shut
completely. Tomorrow,
actually later today, is
the big day — court!*

check out the rest of Big Vic's POW on page 10



EDITOR'S NOTE VOLUME 12.01+

Hey Beat readers this is it! A new year! The big two-double-oh-seven. Welcome back to you faithful and welcome on board to you newbies! Sure this issue you have in your hands reads as issue 12.01, plus we have included a host of writings from the 11.49 session that did not make it in that issue. And if you still do not know what the twelve stands for, it stands for our twelfth year as a weekly publication, and the one equals the first issue of the year; thus: 12.01! It is our goal to get the "big" Beat back to being a weekly that is only several weeks behind. We wish we could be a weekly that comes out immediately, but given the amount of work that goes into this 'zine, it would be way too difficult.

Regardless, none of this would be possible if it wasn't for the amazing work on both sides of the fence. Sure it takes a committed Beat team of facilitators, layout team, editors and typists, but it also takes you courageous writers and poets to deliver the goods to us many readers each week. It takes you thoughtful young people to get up and come to our workshops to participate, and you old school writers to muster up the time to write a piece from wherever you are in the world. With that said, allow us to say thank you for your kindness, your offerings, be it your love, your hate, your fear, your dreams, goals, and your absolute hunger to connect to the readers of The Beat Within community!

Wow, we have to shake ourselves every day given the ride this publication has taken us on since that first issue way back on that dark September day in 1996 when rapper/entertainer/movie star 2Pac Shakur was murdered. Little did we know that this would be what would kick off such a powerful recognizable magazine to thousands and thousands of people from all walks of life, from all over the United State of America! Who would have ever thought that issue 1.01 would take us to this issue 12.01? Who would've thought The Beat Within would be receiving pieces each week from Arizona? Who would have thought there is interest in The Beat Within in New Orleans, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Nevada, Texas to Indiana? Who knows what the New Year holds, but this coming year has to be the year we step it up yet another notch. You with us readers? You with us writers? We hope so.

Sure it's a tragedy, given where most of our supporters sit today/tonight. Sure it pains us that we meet many incarcerated young people each and every day. It pains us to see young people marching off to prison. It pains us to read RIP pieces, and to know many of the people the young person is paying tribute to, were once in our workshops! Oh, it pains us. It pains us to see where many of your mentalities are, thinking there is no other way to go but to carry a cannon and to represent a 'hood, a gang, a color. It pains us to read and hear how you fell into the grips of the system. It pains us to read that one or both of your parents were/are missing. It pains us to see the faces of the many family members coming to juvenile hall daily, or when they can, to visit you. It pains us to hear how many of you have grown up in the system. It pains us to see that juvenile hall doesn't change your thinking, nor do the group homes, camps, ranches, CYAs, alternatives, rehabs etc. It pains us that too many of you move beyond juvenile to the CYAs and adult system where the stakes are even greater when it comes to hate, comes to politics, gangs, violence etc. Ugh. Does any of this pain you?

What is the solution to this mess? It's a big ol' mess too. We wouldn't know where to start if we were asked to help clean up the crap. It is so tough, given every single one of you has a different tale to share. For a number of you we are sure it could be as simple as going to school and respecting your family. For others it may be having to leave the old lifestyle behind you and moving away from the town you know too, too well. Of course, it may be conquering your addiction to alcohol, weed and other drugs - to clear your mind. We suppose it all comes down to how honest you are with yourself in wanting a better life, and how determined you are to succeed free of the criminal justice system. Do you think if you are determined to do well you will do well, no matter if you are inside or free?

We hope for all you readers that this new year, 2007, will be a year where you take charge of your life. We hope this is the year you take the lead with your life and jump on a path that will save you from future heartache. It is easy for us to say, but if you are on your way to giving the system more time, you definitely have to make some serious choices — and they're not all bad either. We have seen and read about so many incredible

life changing stories from the level four prison yards, to the CYA gladiator schools — it all boils down to how bad you want it and if you are a leader that doesn't care what the others see in you!

If you are a young parent or soon to be parent, we hope this 2007 is the year where you step up and shower your child with love, by being responsible, by being present, by taking care of yourself. If you are gonna be eighteen this coming year, make this the year where you leave all your childish behaviors back with your childhood, and begin acting like responsible adults, knowing that the next bad move will be the adult system. If you are going to a program, make this the year you act civil. Make this the year you ask questions when you do not like things or understand how and why things are the way they are. Make this the year you attempt to communicate clearer, not only with your loved ones, but your lawyer, your probation officer, your counselor, doctor, teacher etc. We encourage you to make this the year you stop running! Where has running got you? We only encourage you to run if you are running away from violence, running away from abuse, hate and further pain — and you're running towards help, safety, a better way!

Allow the new year to be the year you succeed wherever you go. Succeed on probation. Succeed on parole. Succeed in placement. Succeed in school. Succeed in getting a legit job. Succeed in saying no to negativity. Succeed in staying healthy. Succeed in avoiding the hate and bullshh drama! Succeed in honoring your parents at home. It can be done readers, it can be done. Think about it... Most young people are NOT marinating in the hall or in the system, most are handling their business. Right? Most are graduating on stage. Most are working part time jobs, living at home etc. etc. Can this be you? You tell us. We say it can. We say you can pull it together. We say you can lead a healthier life.

All right, the topics that were addressed in the workshops prior to the writing that is in this knock-out of an issue were "Disconnection" - We know there are many people in your lives right now that say they want to help you change. But we also know that more often than not, these very same people know nothing (or very little) about your lives and the choices that confront you. They are disconnected from you and your communities, but now they're trying to connect, either because they get paid to or for other reasons.

So, how do you feel about people who try to help you change your lifestyle without knowing anything about your lifestyle? Do they encourage the change they say they want in you, or discourage you from changing? Are there other efforts to cause you to change that you think that would work better? What are they? Even some of us here at The Beat are disconnected from the lives you lead, so please connect us...

Our second topic, "You Blew it" - What have you taken for granted? Was it your freedom? Is it your mom/dad? Grandmother? Brothers and /or sisters? Boy/girl friend? Was it school (a teacher)? Sports? Was it your neighborhood? What about street life? What about your friends? Your home, a home-cooked meal, or even the bed you slept in? The little job? What about the criminal justice system? This week we want you to tell us how you assumed everything was going to be fine, and then out of nowhere you lost "it," blew "it," threw "it" away, all because you took "it" for granted. Tell us about "it." How you had what you had, how you lost "it" over time and what you are attempting to do to get "it" back. We're listening!

Our last topic, "I Have Always Wanted To Learn About..."

If you've hung with us this far, give us a few more lines to ramble off this week's POW (Piece of the Week) recipients. They are Lil' Sam, Teezy F, Vee, Big Vic who writes two, and Lil' Sheiking all from the 150 Crew. Also, we have Rosevette who writes two, Lionfishy, Lex, and Goffy all from SF/YGC. Last but not least we have Stephen, Veronica, Kyle who writes two, Aaron, Young Def, Sankopha, Ruben, Nina, Caina and Derrelle. On a final note, we wish you and your family a successful 2007!! Stay in touch with The Beat Within. We are all very interested in hearing from you. We also encourage any of you to come on through and pay us a visit in San Francisco. We'd love to see you, maybe even give you a job.v Give us a call!

Until next year, we'll leave by sending out this issue to Big Vic and all the young men in the maximum security units who took The Beat Within serious in 2006... you know who you are. Again, thank you all for stepping up huge as writers. You are the heart and soul of this publication. Happy New Year and best to you all. See you in 2007.

The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our communities already—we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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Art: Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

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Special Volunteer: Nancy DeMartini

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From The Beat: Happy New Year to the SF/YGC B3 Butterflies! We are so grateful that you have delivered your fourth installment of writings for the readers of The Beat Within. Thank you. You all are a hit with our readership too. Wherever we go, readers are asking us when we will get more B3 Butterflies, so you better believe we depend on you to keep the writing coming. Remember Butterflies, no matter where you go, we welcome your voices in The Beat Within, so keep the stories, poems and ideas flowing our way, hopefully from the free world too. Thanks to you writers and your teacher, and our Beat colleague, Megan Mercurio for making this possible. With that said, enjoy the literary world of the B3 Butterflies!

From Megan and The B3 Butterflies: Each and every day we meet as an English class for nearly two hours, and try to make sense of our lives and the world around us. We do this by getting to know the characters on the pages of the literature we read, and by examining our own lives so that we can leave the institution transformed and empowered young women. Our writing arises from our souls, and from the myriad experiences we have endured in our short time on earth. Judge us not, simply take in our words with an open heart and learn from the emotions and stories of our lives. Special Thanks: Lauryn Livengood.

Things We See, Yet Never Saw Coming

Things we see, yet never saw coming
 How is it that we're standing still yet we feel
 Like we're running
 Away from ourselves most of the time we cause
 Our own pain
 Constantly feeling like we're going insane
 No one to blame no lame excuses to use
 Simply the lack of understanding in the
 Lifestyle that we choose
 What do you say when they ask you "How
 Do you plea?"
 I simply respond I was trying to fly free.

-Emalijah

Screw that I'm
 gonna get up

on my own I don't
 need no help

Choices

Choices that I try to make
 Seem so real but actually
 they're fake...
 I try to go down the right
 road, but the harder I try I
 never get by...
 Because every time I try to
 leave, something keeps pullin'
 me back and pushin' me down
 the wrong track...
 But now I think it's time to
 say "Screw that I'm gonna get up
 on my own I don't need no help..."
 So now that I realize I can
 do right by myself I'm gonna
 get up, walk straight and I
 still don't need no help...
 Now that I'm tryin' to walk down
 the right road I don't need no
 suckas steppin' on
 My toes...

-Paradise

Untitled Poem

I was walkin' down the street
 Came to a stop sign and kept walkin'
 And the person in the car said, "Move 'fore I hit yo' feet.
 As I kept walkin' the car got closer.

I ran across the street and I sat on the curb
 And I saw a beautiful poster
 On the poster were four black girls and they were starting a burb club
 I went to join the club and said we should take a trip to the roller coaster.
 -A Rock Star

Today was a Good Day

At the beginning of the day
 I feel like going back to sleep
 I see my friend and I say "hey"
 But not before I get something to eat.

I have to think about what to wear
 I call up some homies to see who's in the hood
 My cousin says, "pass that shhh" but I don't want to share
 At the end of the night I knew it was gon' be all good
 'Cause no homies got shot and that's all good.

When I got to the house
 I was ready to get some sleep
 My Grandma was like "Nah, you gotta bounce..."
 I was like screw it- I wonder who's in the streets?
 I decided to cop an ounce
 Then I went to go get something to eat.

-Smirks

La-La Land

I try to think, but I can't be understood
 I'm left wondering, but my mind feels like a pod
 I try to walk, but I'm left in the 'hood
 I don't know what to do, I'll talk to you
 But I'll look like a fool.

He said, "Take my hand,"
 He really doesn't feel right
 I'll take you to La-La Land
 Hold me with all your might.

It really didn't feel right
 And no, he didn't hold me with all his might
 La-La Land was just a deceptive place
 And made me really want to spit on his face.

-Lil' Miss Y

A Fork in My Road

I'm driving down this road,
 And all I see is emptiness
 It's hard to carry this load
 When my heart has so much stress.

I just want to go home,
 But I know it's not that easy
 I'm isolated from my family and I feel so alone
 Can't drive much longer, I'm feeling queasy.

I think I see a sign,
 Need a rest stop to clear my head
 Maybe I can call my parents to drop a line,
 'Cause if I don't I might as well be dead.

-Luda's Wifey

I Didn't Do It

We got out of the taxi
 That's when he asked me,
 "Baby are you thirsty? I need a Swisher."
 I said, "Yeah baby, but what about mister-mister?"
 He said, "Just walk up the hill..."

And he'll be right there."
 So I started to walk
 Then suddenly grew scared...
 I call my baby and tell him the news
 He told me to walk faster and
 There's nothing he can do
 But he'll meet me immediately
 Just as soon as he's done.
 He stays on my phone
 So I don't feel alone
 Then a car stops
 And says, "You're under arrest!"
 I'm flabbergasted
 Then I ask, "For what?"

She says, "For loitering and intent of prostitution"
 I say, I'm not doing that, what is the problem?
 But that's when she clapped the cuffs on my wrists
 And I was never again to be dismissed.

-Brandi

Me

When I was five my mom bought me new Chucks
 in the wrong color
 Little did she know
 They stayed in the closet the whole summer.

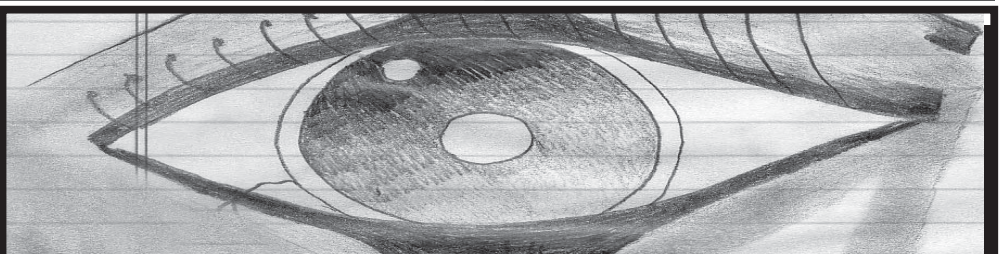
When I was ten I found out I was several months
 along
 I had no idea
 So I smoked and drank all night long.

When I was twelve my brother gave me a chrome
 toy
 Two weeks later
 He's being mourned by his homeboys.

When I was a very young teen I came in and out
 of jail
 It was the only place to turn
 When all else failed.

When I was fifteen I spent my birthday in jail
 Just waiting for a release
 Because I can't get bail.

-Guerra



Black People

why do black men have to struggle in life
 why my black sistas have to struggle in life
 answer me why —
 you can't because you don't know how it is for us
 if my black people don't have a diploma
 it is hard for them to live a good life
 why do my black sistas have to put they' self in a position
 that can cause them to be on the corner
 because she is struggling to feed her family
 most black people you know be on welfare
 and still can't support they' family
 most black people you know be on welfare
 and still can't support they' family
 so tell me why we weren't born with a silver spoon in our
 mouth
 my black people had to fight and struggle they whole life
 jus' so they can be treated the same way as white people
 because they treated my black people like animals
 because they treated my black people like a man's best
 friend
 and definition for that is — a dog
 yeah they treated my black people like that
 why — because back in slave time
 whatever the white man said it was
 "yes boss — what ever you say boss"
 and the white man would just stand there and laugh
 at my black people because it was funny to them
 to have my black people around the house cleaning
 and washing they' dirty clothes
 and saying "i'm done boss"
 "can I get me a cup of water boss"
 so like i said before why
 do they treat my black people like that — why
 (so peace out beat — this yo' boy lil' sam — god bless
 everybody)

-Lil' Sam, 150 Crew

From The Beat: After slavery, the United States federal government promised every former slave "forty acres and a mule" — but it never happened. It was a minimal payment of reparation. Today the value of forty acres and a mule back then would be much greater. How might that reparation be best distributed today when more African Americans live in cities than in the countryside? How about four years of college and a job? Or some such federal investment in the success of the next generation of African Americans, rather than building more prisons to house a burgeoning neo-slave economy. But regardless of what the government does or doesn't do, the neo-slavery prison cycle must be broken, starting with you, Lil' Sam. We do see the difficulty, but the question that needs most to be answered is not why but how. Ask yourself, "How can I make it out of the system and stay out?" Then, as a free man on the outside, continue to demand justice for all — reparations, education and job training (maybe a job corps with fair pay and transferred placement into private jobs also with a fair wage or salary). But don't wait for anyone else to do it for you, do what you need to do now — to get free and stay free, overcoming present obstacles as well as an oppressive history by your own unbroken, committed energy. Great piece, Sam!

Stuck In The Land Of The Lost

Stuck in the dark
 Stuck with no vision
 Stuck with no job 'cause you got too many felonies in the dope game
 Stuck with money on your brain
 Stuck in the cold rain
 Stuck in the hood where when it feels like everything's going right it
 goes wrong.
 Stuck with these unfaithful pros.
 Stuck in the land of the lost with nowhere to go.
 Stuck with the only options of death or the pen.
 Sometimes I sit stuck in my own mind, thinking about how can I get
 out of the lost land of Oakland. It seems like no matter how far I go, I
 still feel "stuck in the land of the lost" This is to all relate to what
 I'm saying to all my bros? WE ALL WE GOT!

-Teezy F, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You write that you lost, but in the end you found/cause it's what you say that could turn it around/you can beat the rain and the dark and the luck/if you use each other to help get unstuck/the city is hanging by its own rope/and the knife that can cut it is your voice of hope.

Rosevette

Yep, that's me
 A red headed female
 Thick as can be
 But once I'm free
 The system won't see me
 This my 5th time in these halls
 I'm tired of looking at the four white walls
 We stay watching TV that don't have cable at all
 And we have one hour to play volleyball

Rosevette

Sophisticated as hell
 I'm cold in this little cell
 I be rappin', but I really wanna yell
 Damn this is cruel, not cool
 I'm locked up and I'm looking like a fool
 This what I get for not going to school

Rosevette

Have a lot of self-esteem
 My life is like a dream
 I got folks that stay on my team
 But it's cool, 'cause I'm a female
 With a lot of self-esteem.

Rosevette

Yep, that's me.

-Rosevette GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: From what you have written today, it's clear you have the intelligence to stay out of this system and to take yourself in an entirely new direction. But even more important than intelligence is determination. We don't see any lack of that, either, so we have very high expectations for you.

A Baby

Only a baby...
 Can smile that kind of smile
 And feel that kind of soft
 And give that kind of happiness.
 Only a baby...
 Can win your heart
 And love and devotion
 In one brief moment
 Just by being there- just by being yours
 Only a baby...
 Can be so tender and trusting
 So little in your arms
 And yet the biggest thing in your life!
 (This was written for my baby boy Stephen Jr.)

-Stephen, Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: A child is a great responsibility that takes a life-long commitment. Are you prepared for that commitment? Having a baby is the probably the most important and precious thing that will ever happen to you. Keep in mind that every choice you make from this point on in your life will affect your baby, too, for good or bad. What is your plan for you and your son's future? Make a point to keep your child's best interest in mind, and don't forget that you are and always will be significant in your son's life, so stay active in his life and be a positive role model! Beautiful poem!

why

do they treat my black people
 like that — why

I'm Still Alive

Why? Why? Why? is the question
 No! no! no! is my response
 This can't be happening, this isn't me
 I know who I am and where I stand
 So I continue to demand, to block all that are lies.
 That's all it is as I look in the mirror,
 then I hear the whisper in my right ear
 Look where he put you, see how you let him win
 Again I don't understand
 Why? Why? Why? And no! No! No!
 Again I stand in denial
 The voice says you don't know
 Because I had your soul
 You are blinded.
 So I take a second and look around,
 Start to breathe stronger and stronger
 As my thoughts suddenly pause, the denial continues.
 Then I hear the voices through the left ear
 Voices of strangers that control me and hold authority.
 Just then I say, the truth hurts.
 That night I said to myself out of nowhere...
 The mind is powerful
 The soul is deep,
 The heart is pride
 So why do I feel like I want to die?
 I close my eyes and realize it's just pain I must memorize
 And not deny the tears,
 Continue to fall in silence like streams
 As the mind controls the thoughts
 The soul holds on
 And the heart breaks free
 No longer does the pride stand
 The battle is fought
 Suddenly the light shines so bright that it almost blinded
 me
 Yet it was completely dark at night
 Then I realized, I'm still alive.

-Veronica, Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: Veronica, we believe you have only touched on the depth of your experiences through this piece. There are so many questions left unanswered. It seems you have faced death and are amazed that you are still alive. What does this mean for you? Your life lies before you to make of what you will! It helps to talk about your ideas and your problems with others who are supportive and good listeners. Our thoughts and ideas are meant to be shared with those we trust; by doing so we can receive input that may many times bring us to greater understanding and wisdom. Who is it that you trust with your thoughts and ideas? Who encourages you and gives you hope? We encourage you to continue to write about your life experiences and to share your life walk with others.

Heather

Christmas is a time to celebrate and come together
 The only good Christmas I had was the years Hope and
 Heather were there.
 It wasn't that bad, we still got presents but also a new sister
 Heather loves me very much as I love her
 She is my favorite sister
 I really miss her
 I love all my sisters
 I wish I had a brother
 I am the rebellious child in my family
 I did a lot of drugs and now I stutter
 Now I'm in here and they are at home
 I want to get out, go to Oregon and see some snow
 I disappointed her and my other family
 I feel so lonely in here all by myself.

-Kyle, Durango Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: Your love for your sister and how much you miss her is very palpable. Have you thought about what you would do to make sure never to spend Christmas or any other holiday away from your sister and family?

You Blew It

In my life, I've taken a lot of people and things for granted. I've taken my family for granted, especially my grandma and my siblings. I've taken for granted a couple of boyfriends as well as other people who've done a lot of things for me. And I've taken my freedom for granted, too.

My grandma's done a lot of things for me. She's raised me. And she let me go out and spend the night with friends — and I started drinking and all that fun stuff and got out of control. Then she moved to a senior citizen place, and I couldn't go back to live with her!

I used to have to watch my little siblings, and I'd get so frustrated I'd hit them. I'd feel bad about it though. I was just a youngster myself, but my mom started doing drugs — and the kids got taken away! I felt really bad, because I'd thought they would always be there, and they weren't.

I took for granted a couple of good boyfriends and guys that did really nice things for me, and I treated them how my inconsiderate ex-boyfriends used to treat me — and it didn't get me nowhere but alone by myself.

Eventually, I was thinking that I was grown, going and getting drunk and all that other stuff, every single day! They sent me home on EM (electric monitor), and I blew it. I was on the run, and I got caught by the police — and now I'm in this sucky unit.

-Vee, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your frankness is wonderful, especially when you describe your behavior toward a couple of good boyfriends as being like the behavior of "inconsiderate ex-boyfriends" toward you. Yeah, that's the kind of insight de-toxing can help you own up to. As for getting drunk and high everyday being grown-up behavior, well, it's true some grown-ups do it, but that doesn't really make anyone a grown up, which means rather someone mature enough to handle life's responsibilities in a way that balances life's joys and pleasures with its duties and hardships. Wherever your granny is living, she would love to hear that you're doing better — and even if you can never live with her again, it doesn't erase all those years she spent raising you. We're sure her love for you is undiminished, even if it's all mixed up with pain right now. Make each day a step along a bridge that will take you to the life you deserve and your granny would love to see you living, wherever that turns out to be.

If I Had A Father

If I were to apologize for not being what you want me to be, then I won't be me.

I won't coward down to your level, 'cause it seems you coward down to be someone else. If you're telling me to be what I'm not, then you were raised to be like a fool.

When you tell me to go to school and try to raise your hand at me, because I just missed a couple days, and you yourself have not gone to school since the ninth grade.

Why don't I raise my hand at you for trying to raise me to be somebody else?

I don't know who went to college and did good, and who said I wanted to be like you.

Oh! You never said that? Well, what happened to "don't be like me", working my whole life for nothing. Whoever said I want to be like you? Not me! And if my mom did, she lied. You know what? I'm going to be my own self. Do my own thing. Graduate, go to college, help the community. Who cares if I've been locked up? That don't mean I can't do it. So when you see me shine, don't be proud. Just know you were wrong.

That's what I would say, if I had a father.

-Aaron, Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: Fathers! They hold such a powerful image for us in our minds. For some that image is one of inspiration, for others a disappointing letdown, for others possibly an imaginary character! But all in all, our fathers are men who are humans with weakness and strengths we may not yet understand or recognize. Even without the father figure you desired in your life, it seems you are struggling forward to become a man of integrity. What is it that inspires you to be more, to do more than the examples around you? We encourage you to drop us some lines about your inspiration or motivation. We hope you are able to continue to make the most of your life and most likely become an inspiration for others who have grown up in similar circumstances.

I'm Ready

my jaws are clenched, fists are balled up tight
can't loosen me with a wrench when i'm ready to fight
blood flowin' through my veins, muscles bulging out
tryin' not to go insane, tryin' not to shout
keeping quiet, stayin' calm
'cause a riot cause some harm
i'm ready, been prepared since birth
trigger-finger steady, send you back to the earth
i can't stop myself and i wouldn't if i could
it's bad for your health, it's in no way good
so keep a distance 'cause i might snap
i got no resistance, it's time for you to take a nap
good night, good bye, see you another day
can angels really fly or is that what they say
one bullet, one shot — now you dead
you thought you was hot, got too big in the head
so i had to slow your roll, put that to an end
didn't let me reach my goal, wasn't even my friend
we was close — we was the same
now you a ghost and i'm at the top of my game
you was the evil side of me, didn't let me do right
i was always sucka free so i had to kill you that night

-Big Vic, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You had us all twisted for a minute, 'till we finally caught your drift and who you were meaning to kill — the evil side of yourself that kept pushing for more evil still. Yeah, it takes more courage than a trigger-man on the out to pull the trigger, when you take a look into yourself and finally figure out who your worst enemy is — the one who betrayed you time and again, the one who didn't really care about you or what might happen, just so he got his way, felt his rush of power and had his day. Well, Big Vic, you wrapped him up like a Christmas present and sent him away, buried deep in the past where nothing can change, 'cause truth to tell, he was criminally insane and kept setting you up to get stuck with the pain. So, we're glad to say, his loss, your gain! Our poet laureate of The Beat, just cut the strongest chains on his feet. Much respect and love — peace!

Love At First Sight

I hear people say "Love at first sight" all the time, yet I have never believed in it. Is there a difference in love when a mother looks at her child, or what you feel when you see some female in the mall?

I thought I believed in love at first sight, but when I got locked up, I realized that me and my girl became a one-way relationship. I thought about her all the time, yet she was out with some other guy. So now I think that love at first sight should only be used when a mother first looks at her newborn kid. But no. I have heard many stories of moms throwing away their kids and letting them freeze and die on the streets. Where I'm from it's a common sight.

So, as I keep thinking about this topic and try to realize what "love at first sight" is, I think it is more of feeling than anything else. A crack addict might feel "love at first sight" with his first hit. Or you might feel "love at first sight" when you see a fine female at the mall. But in the end, the crack will kill you and the girl will break your heart.

Correct me if I'm wrong, but "love at first sight" is feeling too good to be true. You might believe in it and have that feeling, but in the end it will bite you in the ass. This I tell you from personal experience, and I might be wrong. Anyway, thanks for reading my piece. So peace out.

-Lionfishy B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We really like how you analyzed this topic. Maybe your "girlfriend" who went out with others decided that you really weren't thinking about her when you did whatever it was that gave the system power to take you away. So, when you write that you "thought about her all the time," does that also describe what you were thinking about before you got locked up? In any case, we absolutely agree with your thoughtful views on love at first sight.

Don't Know Where I'm Going

Don't know where I'm going
But I know what I want.
The devil, I think is in me,
But it's just a taunt.
When I go to sleep, what if I don't wake up?
Still trying to figure out,
Am I going up?
Scared straight, cuff shackles
Gangbanging and cop cackles.
All sounds of demons in your ear,
Trying to control controversial fear!
What is this life I've led?
Born gangbanging and cocking back the lead,
Stupidity invading my young mind,
And sunshine is something
I haven't seen in a long time.
My freedom's taken away,
All because I served God in the wrong way!
Walking streets, ducking cops
Rushing only to catch the hood, choppin' rocks.
Wrong doing bro,
Been given plenty of chances,
But all I said was "So what!"
and still walking with a manly strut.
That part of my life is over,
time to clear my head and stay sober.
Thanks to my mom and family I'm a better man.
I prayed and sorrowed, and God gave me his hand.
Don't know where I'm going, but it's coming.
Be happy as ever when I see the sun again.

-Young Def, Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: Young Def, you say the gangbanging life is over, but where are you going once you see the sun? Without a vision or a plan for what's next and how you will accomplish it, you may find yourself wandering back to the "old ways". Your desire to remain sober acknowledges the part of you awakened in detention. Detention is a good place to reflect and set goals. Who is this person aside from the drugs? We imagine that you are a talented young man with a passion for living a fulfilling life. You CAN live a different life. In order to stay on track and turn these desires into reality, you will need a positive support system. Who do you have in your life to support you in making the changes you desire? These things, that you want now in your life, grab at them and don't let them escape your reach.

Something To Think About

Are you a person who shares the fear of another?
Are you a child wishing you knew the love of a mother?
Where you are from...do drugs linger in the streets?
Are gun shots random?
Where you are from...do fathers disappear like a ghost or a phantom?
Do you believe that one day...my people will rise and overcome sorrow?
Do you believe that everyday is promised, but wish to not awake tomorrow?
Can you be certain that everyone has a divine purpose on earth?
Can you be certain that the good die young and lucky ones drive off in a hearse?
If you are a victim now, later you can be a survivor.
If you hustle and grind to the wire, you'll force the struggle to retire!

-Sankopha, Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: You ask so many questions and to question is to seek understanding. We wonder what or who you are seeking to understand and at the same time knowing what you've been through, we throw a response back at you. We hear these hurtful things you say expressing your sadness, pain and depression and we want you to know that we understand where you're coming from and that hopefully you choose the right way out of your troubles. Writing out on paper is a good way of showing who you really are, so continue to write and move forward with your life.

You Blew It

Ever since I tried to get my way I changed
I started acting strange
Disrespecting my mom
Acting up, running wild
I wanted to succeed

People said I'm an out-of-control child
I could've got what I need
But you see I blew it
My thoughts are so deep
I can't sleep

Me thinking about my mom make me weak
All the stuff I put her through

You wouldn't want to be next to the person
That hurt you

We could've been a caring family

Like the Brady Bunch

Have family traditions, go on outings, having lunch

But I blew it you see

I'm locked up and not even free

I know I'm going to college

Because I got the knowledge

I'm young and that's a dream I could achieve

And that's one dream I'm not going to blow

-Rosevette Unit 5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: What's past is past, Rosevette. The guilt you feel over how you disrespected your mother is real and probably justified, but you can't change the past, only the future. That's why we think you are so right to focus on your future and college. Yes, you have the knowledge and will gain even more. If you follow this dream, there will come a time when you and your mother can sit and talk as friends, and even laugh about that "out-of-control child" you once were.

Redemption

Redemption: To make up for ones actions, to be released from debt, to do good. Such a word doesn't exist when walkin' the streets of your 'hood.

You do what you need to for survival, but a lot of times your actions are misunderstood.

No just by others, but yourself included. You mix up survival with hate, 'cause your mind gets polluted.

Sometimes from the liquor, sometimes from drugs. Those two things blind you from the truth. You forget what survival was.

Next you know you are behind the bars of the system. Having dreams about your loved ones 'cause you constantly miss them.

One minute you are a homey walkin' the streets but next you know you fell and that feels like the seventh circle of hell.

But you know you have to be strong 'cause, you see in life you are still young. The past is the past. Learn from your mistakes and move on.

Make a change in your life, make a true positive decision. Only one word to describe how I'll make my life change.

Redemption: To make up for one's actions; to be released from debt; to do good.

- Ruben, SEF Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: We all can feel that you want to change. We do learn from the past and our mistakes. We hope you find the redemption you are looking for, and on your journey you continue to write and share with us readers. We care.

To The First Timer

I been coming to Juvenile Hall since I was eleven years old. Today I sit in max unit 'bout to turn eighteen, lookin' at twenty-five years or more, sentenced as an adult. Yeah — tried and sentenced as an adult!

What I want to say to you young ones in here: This is not the life! Because when you in jail, you have to do everything that other people tell you to do. Me, I'd rather be on the outs and doing what I want to do. In here I stress every day because I can't see my family or my girlfriend. By you being up and here and away from your family, you can't be there for them or keep them safe. You never know if they're might ever get shot whether they're doing anything or not, because bullets don't have names on them.

I know it's hard out there not to do the crimes that ya do! I know because I been there and done it. But there are better things out there in this world to do to get money than doing crimes. Really all you have to do is go to school and learn everything you can. Take advantage of all the programs that they have for you out there, because in the future you could be something, be someone, instead of being out there robbing and doing hella dirt.

Just look at what's happening to me! I'm looking at twenty-five years to life! I got so many chances to do good, but I just kept coming back. Now they're not letting me out. Once you come up into max unit, you are probably going to the "Y" or to the pen', and you will be lucky if you get to go back to the boy's side of AlaCo, those units where you can still go to a group home or Camp or get released on EM (electric monitor) or even a straight release.

I be hella mad when people be coming back from court crying and all that, talking about how they got three-to-five years or something like that! 'Cause they're going see daylight again — but me, I'm not going see daylight for twenty-five years. You feel? ... To be continued.

-Lil' Man Man, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It is our constant prayer that some of these youngsters, which in the past included you, wake up before they have to face what you're facing. We've watched way too many young men grow up, passing in and out of juvenile hall, moving from the unit of youngsters, unit by unit, all the way to max, just like you did. And then, when they're actually facing that bone-crushing 25 with an L, they suddenly get it! Flipping burgers at Macdonald's would be lot better than where they're going, 'cause you still get to do what you want on your days off, or before or after work. But that so-called easy money got them addicted to the game, and they risk they're lives and their freedom — and their families lives, too, 'cause how many times have we heard about someone's house getting sprayed (too many times)? — just to keep chasing money and fame in a scandalous game that won't even pause when you catch a bullet or a life sentence. You're gone and the game that swallowed your life just goes on without you. We really don't mean to be rubbing salt in your wound — in fact, we thank you deeply and profoundly for this piece. 'Cause just as you do, we hope someone sees through your eyes before they're families see them die or go to the pen' for 25 to life. And we're proud to say, you're spirit is far from broken. Judging from this piece, your heart of hearts, in a way, has just awoken! God bless you, and may you see daylight and another chance to do right, long before the end of that sentence. You never know, social attitudes change, and today's throw-away-the-key policies may not remain the same. So keep your mind right, keep hope alive and continue to strive to live a good life from here on in, young friend, even in the pen'.

I Wonder, I Just Wonder

I have always wanted to know about life and how you can make it through hard times. I have always wanted to learn about males and how they brains work. It's a trip how they work. They could love you and don't show it. A female, on the other hand, can't do the same. I wonder why? Do you know...?

Sometimes I wonder what's so different between a male and a female besides what between their thighs. I wonder what's different when he lies and she cries. I wonder, I wonder... I just wonder.

-Destiny Unit 5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We made this a piece of the week because it's so unusual... and, because we don't know how to answer your question. Some scientists have spent long years trying to see if there are differences in the brains of males and females, or differences in the way they process information, etc. But we don't think we've ever seen a better distinction than your wondering "what's different when he lies and she cries." In those few words, you said a whole lot!

We Strugglin' For What?

Yo, through all the harsh history
 through the games and the mysteries
 the main message of history is no joke
 it's like putting your finger to a needle and getting' poked
 speed and coke that's all they want to smoke until they
 choke
 dead on the floor. We roll our life away like a pair of dice
 while the white man sell us around like merchandise.
 It's a shame babies cryin', women getting' raped
 the white man's dirty, he's a big disgrace.
 I ain't racist I'm only sharing the game
 if you think I'm wrong you ain't feeling my pain
 they try to lock us up put us down
 they hang all us black folks by the neck like a bunch of
 clowns.

Doin' it like Martin Luther King
 let ya know I had a dream
 quicker than Harriet Tubman runnin' slaves
 down the street like it's nothing.
 People say the world has changed
 but for us black folks it feels the same
 Martin Luther King tried to make a change
 and Malcom X spittin' truth and game
 never for power and fame
 In 1968 was the end of slavery
 we finally got our rights because of bravery
 for more than 400 years we got no aid from our
 communities
 took many black folks to create some of that unity
 because we black zombies.

Do you believe when they say we ain't nothing and can't
 grow
 all we are is dope dealers, gangstas and hoes
 do you believe when they be telling you lies
 all in the media to make the world look crazy to keep you
 inside
 why you listen to those teachers at school
 you a black single parent teacher that strugglin' they think
 you a fool
 they give your kids bad grades and put 'em in dumber

classes
 you killin' shorty teacher I wonder how we be lasting
 underground in a casket ancestors turning
 I'm learnin' somethin' everyday
 -there is no Lazareth. Words like God is Greek or Latin
 so if you study Egypt you see the truth written by the
 masters
 my people chillin', getting high, relaxin',
 envisioning ownership, yo, it could happen
 what do we own? Not enough land. Not enough homes
 Not enough banks to give my brotha a loan
 What do we own?
 the black skin on our backs
 we ask for reparations then they hit us wit' tax
 and insurance too. We literally old
 if we stop being controlled and stop being so bold
 because we black zombies, yo, we trapped in our own
 brains
 we get behind bars, we already gone insane
 yo, we already gave up and cut our own heads off
 stab our own backs and dream too much
 without fulfilling reality
 we too greedy
 an can't have one or two chains, we need three of them
 can't have one or two guns without squeezin them
 on our people and forget black people because whites ain't
 got no lead to them
 we all get down and get up
 victims walk around with down syndrome
 all stuck, fainting, shoutin', catch the holy ghost in church
 scared to do it for ourselves unless we see somebody
 doing it first
 we brave for demonstration and segregation
 just to make our own generation
 of black zombies

-Cainan and Derrelle, Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: This is an excellent piece that speaks to the African-American experience. It is truly unfortunate that there has been and is so much pain and injustice for black people in America. However, there are many people who have triumphed by overcoming the odds and defying the stereotypes. These are the people to follow! This piece is a great challenge not to get caught up by the "easy" road of drugs and violence, but to rise above that type of lifestyle to fight for justice and lead by example. Keep writing! Keep teaching! We are listening!

A New Year

2006 was a really bad year for me and my family. My grandpa died, which devastated my dad and my sister. I ran away from home and started doing things that I've never done before, just to be with a boy that only cared about sex and money. My family was hurt when I got arrested for prostitution and was sent to juvenile hall in L.A. So all in all, 2006 was a very bad year for me especially, and that's how I know that 2007 is going to be a better year.

In 2007, I plan on getting my GED and going to college. My goal is becoming a nurse and working at Children's Hospital in Oakland. Then I'm going to work on getting a job so that I can stay home and help out with my family, while I'm going to college. I know it's a lot to do, and it won't be easy, but it's better than doing the wrong thing and getting punished for it, when I know I'm smarter than that.

As for a relationship, I know I'm not ready for one right now, and besides, I'm young and I have to work on myself until I can be with anyone. But I'm always going to have time for my family and myself.

-Lex GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: 2006 was definitely a bad year for you, but it seems like you have 2007 planned out in a wonderful way that is going to make all the years that follow so much easier than all the years that have gone before. We have no doubt from reading this well-written piece that you can achieve anything and everything you want.

Father

This man was as a rabbit out of his cage.
 Every time he left his house he wasn't safe
 The drugs would be calling his name
 They wouldn't stop talking to him.

He was like a cop around doughnuts
 He would be with a lot of tweakers.
 The tweakers twisted their toes 'till their temples turned
 tense.

They were pretty dang ugly.
 The tweaker he became, destroyed everything you know
 A window was broke, you heard a crash.

He was nobody, nothing to anyone
 He was white because he never wanted to be in the sun.
 He is sitting deciding what he has done
 He never thought he had a son
 The next thing you know
 His kid was at his door.

-Kyle, Durango Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: Drugs can make people look ugly and act ugly. They take way and don't give much in return. A lot of time people may think that drugs "hurt nobody but me" and then they find out they have a kid and it's no longer just them. They find themselves at the crossroads, deciding which path to take and the decision they make affects others.

My Big Day: The Decision

"To be tried as an adult," the judge said. Then I woke up. It's late at night, or early in the morning, depends on how you look at it. The time is around 3:00 AM. Lights been out since at 11:30. I am extremely tired, my eyes are heavy. Yet they never seem to shut completely. Tomorrow, actually later today, is the big day — court!

They are supposed to make the decision whether to charge me as an adult or a juvenile. But who knows? They have been contemplating this since late March. I have a gut feeling that this is the day they tell me some news. And I am pretty clueless about my case. No PO visits or calls, and the same goes for my attorney. Left in this institution to face and fend off my wildest imaginations. Who knows what the outcome will be?

Today has a much greater significance than just my court day. It is December twelfth, the day of the "Virgen De Guadalupe," the lady of my country, Mexico. My mom says it is a blessing, maybe some sort of sign. I hope so! I can't handle all this stress much longer, too much tension. I play many different scenarios in my head, various outcomes. Some are clearly exaggerated, and I throw them out the window, but I could face up to fifteen years if I get tried as an adult. I can't let myself keep thinking like this, so I close my eyes for a minute and next thing I know — staff is waking me to wash up for court!

I am mad at myself for going to sleep, even if it was just for a short two hours. I slowly walk to the bathroom to relieve myself of the soda I drank to help me stay awake. After that, I splash ice-cold water on my face to wake me up, put the rare Colgate toothpaste on my brush (Since County is going bad and only offering "maximum security" toothpaste, it's lucky for me I was already prepared for the drought; but my stash is getting low, so I got to come up some way.) Once I got that done and apply deodorant, I slick back my hair. I never thought it would get this long — just ten months ago I was bald. It's good to see change in my life.

Back to my room I go, to wait a couple hours till seven, shift change. I'll come out and just sit around till they pick me up today. I think I'll take the book *Rain Of Gold* with me for some light entertainment. I am not really that hungry this morning, so I'll pass on breakfast, but I'll say my prayer before I leave, praying that La Virgen Y Dios will guide me today.

Here comes staff to take me away from my little cave of isolation. I hear the shackles and cuffs clinking together, making an intolerable noise. Once on, the shackles and handcuffs are always too tight. "For safety reasons," I get told, as usual. What safety? Am I really that bad a person that they need to torture me like this in order for them to feel safe? — I believe that I am not a dangerous individual. — Well, the smirk on my face let's them know I don't care. They are afraid of silence. I keep to myself. I wish everyone a good day and get my fair share of good lucks on the way out the door, to face a world of chaos. I'll need more than luck, I'll need a miracle. That could happen though. Right? I got faith. And "faith is victory."

So, down the walkway I go, shackles grinding up against my ankles. Once we reach Intake, I go into "the tank" to wait till the van is ready to leave. I see a lot of familiar staff and say wussup. Some just walk by and continue on with their little, meaningful lives. I don't know how they do it, lock people up, especially a fellow minority. I could never to do it, lock a kid behind a door, control his/her life with a couple of simple words. But hey, it's a job, and you need to survive. So they work. We hustle.

Once the van is ready, we go on a little field trip leading to the Hayward Courthouse, and I get to see the "real" world for a little while, which is better scenery than the hills and the new Juvenile Hall beside and above the old one that

holds me prisoner. I wonder if people on the street know what is inside the van. And if they do, I wonder what they think about me? As our trip comes to end, I begin to think about court again. Will this be the day I find something out? I really doubt it, but it won't hurt to wish.

We arrive in the garage. As I step on the stool, I slightly lose my balance and cut my ankle a little, causing me more pain and frustration than I'm already experiencing. I think about just falling down there and then, and really hurting myself. Then maybe, just maybe, I can get some money out of this ordeal. But no. That would mean more court dates, and I don't want that. Once on the ground, they remove us from our straps and handcuffs, and I feel a lot better. The shackles still hurt, but I'll live through it.

They give us our breakfast and lunch bags. These consist of Kix cereal, a juice, a milk, and a muffin. Lunch is dried-up sandwich, a milk, a cookie, and an orange. It's not as bad as it sounds, compared to the County meals. I'm know it will only get worse for us once the new hall opens. We won't be having these trips to court, no more "freedom" even for a couple hours in transit. Got to cherish it while it lasts!

We get led to the tank, for what seems to be a marathon of waiting. The other guys with me act hella childish, but I get lost in my book. Then, when I think time can't go any slower, the sheriff calls my name. I walk into the court room with my head held up high. I want to put my famous smirk on my face, but at a time like this, it wouldn't be a good idea. I sit at a table next to my attorney. He looks like a stranger, maybe because — he is. I see my family walk in, which brings a smile to my face. Haven't seen my brother in almost a month, but it feels like years!

We wait in silence for something to happen. I'm not sure what we needed to wait for, but suddenly the time arrives, and my attorney begins to talk to the judge. The words that come out seem to be in another language. I been doing my studying though, so I can make out most of the words. The judge speaks — and I feel this is the time! My insides seem to turn with the hands on the clock. Then, my worst fear! They postpone my case again! This time, till January sixteenth. Another month's wait. No Christmas or New Year's.

I can't let myself get mad though. And my attorney tells me that it's looking good, that it's going to go the way I want it to. I don't know my left hand from my right hand right now and can trust no one and nothing, so I ignore his comment. I'm not sure what I felt at this time, but I am exhausted. I turn to face my family. My brother laughs at my hair, and that brings a smile to my face. I nod towards my parents and they smile. They have been so supportive during this whole saga that I have to keep my head up, for them. I turn to exit the room. With my last step out, I leave the real world once again.

I go back to my little cave of isolation, my "room", my solitary domain. I prepare to answer all the questions of my fellow detainees — prepare myself for the trials I face, all the time, in my unit.

-Big Vic, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Whoa! Before we respond to the content, allow us to praise your narrative mastery! This is so well-written it's breath-taking, all the more so because the subject matter is so serious, so life-altering (or, in this case, with the eventual anti-climactic ending of yet another postponement and more of the same everyday "trials" on the unit — what a great word choice by the way: trials! — an experience less life-altering than life-defining, more of the same incarceration with suspended judgement like a sword hanging by a thread over your neck, as it were). Actually, we'll cut this response short because there's nothing we can say about the content of your piece that you don't say better already in the piece itself. Who knew Big Vic the poet to be such a master of prose narrative? In any event, thank you so much for sharing this classic narrative of the trial of going to trial as a juvenile waiting to see if he'll be tried as a juvenile or, under current California law, as an adult. (See our response to one of Choyce's pieces this week for our opinion of this unjust law passed by popular vote and upheld by the California Supreme Court — placing our laws punishing juveniles among the most draconian in the international community: the land of the free and the home of the brave?) Much love and respect, Vic. Keep your head up and your heart ... just keep your heart ... faithful. And write! Because you have become — a writer of the highest order.

Life and Death

My life now is caught up in a whirlwind.
I done saw too many people die and I hate it.
From my granny to my friends
they all are leaving and leaving fast.
I done saw at least eight of my closest friends and
family lying in a casket this year alone.
In the past I done almost got killed so many times
I thought I was gonna die,
but I guess it was the Lord telling me that I had to
look out for myself.
I want to live past 20
and in this city, it ain't promised.
I'm tired of seeing my people die and I don't want to
die myself.
I love my life and I don't want my mother crying over
my casket,
so I will try my best to stay alive.

-Lil' Sheiking, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We wish we could see this piece on the front page of every newspaper in California. Juvenile Hall is a place where the youth get put on trial, but sometimes we wonder who is putting the system on trial? For failing it's young people and letting things get so bad... a piece like this should never have to be written in America, but we're so glad you wrote it anyway. Because, sadly, even though you didn't start the problem, and you didn't cause the bloodshed, you and the other people who read The Beat are the ones who can stop it. How? By fighting for the right to be square, by writing, by making videos, by recording music, by VOTING, by finishing high school and either getting out of the hood or staying in it and making it a better place. Writing a piece like this is part of that fight, because you're making yourself heard, and forcing everyone who reads it to face the truth and take a stand. No one's future is not promised, not in this or any other city, but you can stack the odds in your favor can't you? How would you do that?

I done saw at least eight of my closest
friends and family lying in a casket this
year alone

Hard Life

It all started with when she was six,
so young, her own father took her innocence.
So scared to tell was she, so he walked away free.
Three years go by and she finally decides to speak up,
nobody believes her, not even her own mom, so she
begins to cut.
At only nine she cuts but never too deep,
She doesn't want anyone to notice when she goes to
sleep.
Five years go by and it's only been worse.
She's fourteen now, attempts suicide and wishes she
lays in a hearse.
Well two more years go by and she finally gets her
wish.
She overdoses on drugs, dies in her sleep, before she
ever got her first kiss.
Her life could've been longer and better if she just
learned how to cope;
She could've have just played and stayed away from
the dope.

-Nina, Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: We don't know if this is a fictional poem or not, but it's a very sad story. The saddest part is that for many people out there, it is their reality. But you're right in saying that drugs are not the answer to coping with the pain. Drugs may seem to make the pain go away temporarily, but they will only end up making things worse in the end. Learning positive coping skills can help you overcome the worst circumstances and go on to become successful

This I Believe

I believe in a lot of things and sayings. I used to believe that the life I live was the positive way of life 'cause that's how I was brought up to live. A life where gun shots, tires screeching, police and ambulance sirens, feet running, mothers crying 'cause they lost their sons and can't afford a proper burial service, is common.

Since the age of 8, I started leaving my house only if I was armed. I was six years old when I started throwing up my 'hood. Watching the homies go on missions brought a smile on my face, not to mention the adrenaline rush it gave me when I went on them. It felt good knowing that I was patrolling the 'hood with my life ender (gun) in my pants making my barrio safe for the homies and me to do our "G" thing.

I believe in a new and improved life style. But it's like putting a newborn baby into this crooked world. I can't front and say I'ma stop banger and shhh, but yeah, I'ma calm my ass down, 'cause I ain't trying to be in a casket before 20. I got things to do, places to go to, money to make and girls to be with, but it all comes at its own time, me entiendes? I believe I'll still be 'hood-bound in ten years. I'm just keeping it real.

I believe that this gangsta nation will be the same in 20 years, I mean think about it. You can be locked up for a few years and when you get out the 'hood is still gonna be the same. The only thing that might change is the number of guns being passed around or the amount of weight the 'hood's pushing, and the number of homies getting jumped in. But besides that, it's all gonna be the same. Similar war stories are still gonna be told. Homies keeping it crackin' building reputations. And the worst part of being in the barrio — death.

It's a fact that death happens to everyone, everywhere, but it's also a fact that a gang member is ten times more in danger for his life than a regular citizen, and the proof of that is the funerals. And we all know that part of our lifestyle is unsuitable. We won't ever get used to homies dying. If you like going to funerals or take pride in doing time, then I believe you have problems. I believe that a crime should be organized so you get away with it. Not do stupid things like run from placement only to get caught a couple days later. That's retarded.

I believe that if you do a crime and get busted then have the heart to do the time without crying about it. I came to YGC for the first time eight months ago, and I'm still fighting 3 strikes. I believe that the more you struggle when trying to accomplish something, the faster it will be done and the more pride you will have in your accomplishment. I believe in the saying, "Take pride in what you do". But as you can see that for the past 11 years I've been believing in that saying in the gang banging way. I've always taken pride in the 'hood I represent, 'cause that's what I've done all my life. But yeah, this is just what I believe. How about you?

-Goofy B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Here's our biggest fear for you, Goofy. It's that you will calm down a lot, but not enough to avoid that one moment that you'll regret for the rest of your life. Do you know what we're talking about? It only takes a tiny slip, even when you're not doing half the stuff you used to do, to be in that "Oops!" moment — the one you wish you could take back, but never can. You know that we value your intelligence and your honesty very highly, so we hope you know that we are thinking of you and what's in your long-term interest (and that of your child), when we tell you that quitting the game can't really be done in half steps. We pray that you don't learn this lesson the hard way. You say that change comes at its own time, and then ask us, "me entiendes?" The answer is, "No, no te entendemos!" because that sounds too passive, as if you're waiting for that time to come. Real change requires a much more affirmative decision on your part. You may not yet be ready to make that decision, but until you are, expect more of the same. We think you're right about "this gangsta nation" being the same in 20 years... but that tells us nothing about what you will be in that time. Believe us when we tell you that our bloated prisons are overfilled with people who planned their crimes carefully in order to get away with it, but still didn't get away with it. The only difference between them and you is that they can no longer delude themselves with the childish fantasy that they can beat the system. Finally, YOU may have the required body parts to "do the time without crying about it," but what about your mother, your girl, your baby?

You Blew It

I think there are a lot of things I took for granted which led me to get in trouble. The main things I took for granted was my family and school. I think in a way I kinda put the streets before my family, because I've always felt a need for money. I wasn't getting that from anyone. Also because of the game I started missing a lot of school, and eventually I ended up giving all my time to the block.

Now looking back at all the bad decisions I made I realize that I should have taken school more serious, because there's no future in the streets. I also feel bad knowing that I had my mom stressing all the nights I wouldn't go home. And the days she had to miss work to show up at court dates. Now I know how she feels because I too have a child on the way. I don't want to have to be up late at night worrying about my child in the streets. Mainly I don't want my kid making the same mistakes I did.

Last but not least I think I took my girl/baby momma for granted, because she's been there for me since I was 13 (I'm 16 now). I feel bad for all the arguments we ever had and I'm sorry for not telling her I love her every day. Because of my own bad actions she has a big responsibility of taking care of a child by herself, or until I touch down again.

But this time whenever I go home I decided to get my head back in school. And all the other time I want to spend with my girl and my child. I want to be able to share my life with my own family, unlike I did growing up. And for that special one, "I love you." You already know who you are.

-Lil' Ali Bo 150 Crew

From The Beat: Well thought out and put piece of writing. We never truly realize what others go through until we are put in those same shoes. Your head is on straight and your plans are solid ones. You'll get another chance and try not to take advantage of this one. There are other, legal ways of getting money and you will have to do so in order to help support your child. You've been given a big responsibility that you must now step up to the plate and take care. Please don't shy away from it as so many others have done. Also with this responsibility is joy and love on a whole new level you may have yet to experience. Cherish your family and freedom and stay focused on what you are doing. You can do it! You must do it!

Life's Big Lesson

I blew it. I can't believe that I blew it once again. It's all a part of life's big lesson. I am really tired of going through this. The law (probation) has been in my life ever since I was 15 years old. I am now almost eighteen in a month.

My point is that I blew it, but not forever. The beauty of this topic is I blew it but there's always another chance to change as long as you're on this earth. God has blessed me with a release and I am going to give it my all. If you ever think about people who died, they probably wish they could have another chance. As I leave I want you to think about it. Some of my devils are most likely the same devils of yours.

I have a blast smoking weed, chilling and making love with my female friends.

I realized that I have these problems and I can recognize that I need some help. I came up with some solutions to these problems.

One solution is to get a job that will cut down on a lot of my idle time. That's the main thing that has me distracted. That's my solution to the devils -- with God's help first

-Manny, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's so good (and rare) to see the word "solution" in The Beat. We don't see it enough, and we think the one you wrote makes sense: Get a job, cut down on idle time. Another thing to consider is The Mentoring Center, or The Omega Boys Club, or any other group you could hook up where you could be around other people that are also trying to rise above the "fun" stuff that ends up messing with their lives. What do you think?

My Thoughts

Yup, I'm back from the Y. I did a month up there, but it wasn't no evaluation. Instead of that, they sentenced me to be there for two years and brought me back, dismissed the case, and now they 'bout to send me to George Junior for 18 months.

Now I'm a ward of California Youth Authority. Let's say, for example, I commit another crime after I turn 18. Adult court can give me punishment or YA can give me punishment. So, if adult court give me consequences that are not that bad, YA can say, "No, send him here," and I'd do the time over there again. Plus a bunch of other legal shhh I don't really understand yet, but I ain't stressing off it too much 'cause I ain't ever coming back in here for something as serious as assault or robbery again. I probably would mess up on some bs like curfew, but it ain't nothing to trip off of. A few weeks here, a few months there, it's nothing. At least I'll be free.

This some bs though, the shhh they pullin' right now. I been locked up since Feb. 11, 2006, and what is it now, November? My next court date is December 7, ten days from now, so that's pretty much ten months! I wouldn't really be tripping 'cause ten months ain't shhh to me especially being here, but this county supposed to be soft! They should have let me out, like six months ago, and sent me to the Ranch for seven months, and I would have been out by New Years!

But I'm barely 'bout to start 18, and this my first time locked up. Only reason they doing me like this is 'cause I hit people that contribute to society, people that make money for the government. They doing me like this because I took my violence and brought it out the ghetto. I stopped hurting my own people and began to hurt them directly. So what did they do? They hit me 15 times instead of 5, to show me that they will not be messed with, regardless. So if I mess up again, they just gotta squeeze 'cause they already got a nice-ass grip on me.

And all I have to say to this is... Ha! You couldn't give me no strike 'cause I know damn well if I committed my crimes at 16 instead of 15, I would've walked out of here with at least one strike and be screwed up with hella other legal shhh. Like I said last time, I bet if I committed those crimes, those assaults on gang bangers, they would have been let me out so I can mess them up before they give me 25 to life or more.

Like I keep on sayin', they doin' this shhh on purpose! It's a goddamn plan. They set it up this way because they want us to mess with our own people and our people only and leave society alone. Look, if we got problems with each other and separate ourselves into different groups and then come back and kill each other, that's called genocide. America probably wanted an all-white America, so now they wanna get rid of us so they let us kill ourselves and then put us in jars for the rest of our natural lives and make money off us for every year we stay alive in those jars.

Well yeah, I am out.

-Meen B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Your entire essay is based on what happens if you commit another crime. We don't like that premise. We'd rather you concentrate on what happens in your life if you don't commit another crime. If you keep to your commitment not to commit anything more serious than a curfew violation, we don't think you have to worry that much about this dual jurisdiction of control. As for your explanation for why they're treating you like this — because you hit "important" people — serves only to rationalize behavior that should not be rationalized. Whatever "their" motives for treating you like they are, hitting people is not something that can be justified, whether the people you hit are "important" or not. If you were "hurting your own people," you were wrong to do it, even if they system didn't care. We also wish you wouldn't laugh at the system for not being able to give you a strike... The question is, who will have the last laugh? If you know this is a set-up for failure, as you keep writing, then it's all on you not to give them what they want. It's still within your power to control your own actions, whether "small" or "big" — especially when you know their expectations for you!

Deadly Sins

Ey foo', w'at you claim?
 Say the wrong thing and take a hot one to the brain.
 Oh, what you say?
 You wanna live another day?
 You're playing a game with rules made by the devil,
 Heartless Gs born and raised in the ghetto.
 You should have known w'at was coming.
 Look at you now, you're running.
 Take a look at the life you living,
 Stop while you're ahead if in tem years you still wanna be
 breathing.

-Goofy B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Like we said, we are always impressed by your intelligence. Now, can you put this sharp analysis to work to keep you free?

Real Talk

Real talk, while you sittin' up in here talkin' 'bout you can't wait to get up outta here to go kick wit yo' real homies, what you think they doing?

Real talk, while you sittin' in here telling everybody how you did this and that wit' yo' real homies and dat's why you in here, why dey not wit' you?

Real talk, you make yo' bed hard, you gotta sleep on it!

Real talk, everybody you kick it wit', fight for or with, ain't yo' real homies. They say they is, but all they doing is talkin'!

Real talk, yo' real friends is the reason why you ain't got no leftovers; yo' real friends call yo' mom and dad, mom and dad or aunty and uncle. Yo' real friends was there while you was going through hard times!

Man I'm just sayin' real talk!

-Lady M Unit 5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Indeed, this is real talk! But since you know all these things, how did you get caught up and end up here? (Well, we don't mean "end up" because this is just a station stop on a long journey.) When we read a piece like this, we expect big changes in how you plan to live your life when you get out of here. Will our expectations be met?

When I Look In Your Eyes...

When I look in your eyes,
 What do I see?
 I see a life of pain and misery.

When I look in your eyes,
 What do I see?
 I see a punk who abandoned his son and me.

When I look in your eyes,
 What do I see?
 I see a man who is incarcerated in his soul, but wants to be free.

When I look in your eyes,
 What do I see?
 I see a man who is destined to see,
 Life with no parole in the penitentiary.

But when you look in my eyes,
 What do you see?
 Just another baby mama who ain't got nothin' good to be.

When you look in my eyes,
 What do you see?
 Another person suffering a life of pain and misery.

-Guerra GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This is deep, Guerra. This is real poetry, meaning it tells us much more than just the words on the page. If you can write this well, we think you should be able to turn that "life of pain and misery" into literature! Keep up the good work!

How Will 2007 Be Different From 2006?

Well, for the time being, since I am in YGC, I was thinking to myself, should I get a job? Can I get a job? I should go back to school. All these are just popping up in my head so much that it really made my decisions.

Well, let's start on the school topic. Back then I went to Abraham Lincoln for high school. It was good and all for the first year, but after the first year it seemed to me that school was just not my thing. So basically ever since the second year, I barely went to school. So it's like, I haven't been in to school for almost three years now. I finally have the feelings of regret, and I really plan to pass high school.

Before I came into YGC, I was just planning to get my GED. But after I've been in here, I just keeping thinking to myself, what is a GED gonna get me to? So when I thought about it, it's more worth it to get a diploma. I was just thinking about my future a lot now since I'm turning 18. I have a whole life ahead of me now. My goal is to get my diploma, hopefully halfway into 2007 and hopefully get a good job that I can live with, a girlfriend to take care of me and hopefully to get married early.

Well that's about it for my school life. For my work life, I still haven't got the right choice a of job yet and I might just go to college and see what I should do for the rest of my life.

-John B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We really like the goals you've set for yourself, and we think you are 100% right to go for your high school diploma. Even that won't take you too far, but without it, you're going to find it a rough ride. As far as finding a girlfriend to take care of you, we wish you didn't look at it that way. You have to be mature enough to take care of yourself. If you meet a girl and you hit it off, so much the better. But it's not up to someone else to take care of you. That's your responsibility.

I Want My Freedom Back

being locked up got me confused
 it's like riding a bike with no wheels
 and a person being misused
 it's like my words get stuck in my mind
 only seventeen years old and i'm
 running outta time
 need to get out this system
 before it's too late
 i'm want my own meal instead of
 this nasty food on this county plate
 i miss so much in life
 that i need to get it together
 it's like having bad dreams
 and walking in bad weather
 it's crazy how we talk about
 we want to change
 but when the time come near
 we throw it down the drain
 i blew it 'cause now i'm stuck
 in this system
 i want my freedom back
 i miss my brothers and sisters

-Nana, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What you see, we've seen, too. Just how many talk and write about change till they get close to their release date and revert back to the same old same — ending in the same old pain. It's painful for us to watch so many throw their best chance down the drain, even if it does come again — 'cause some keep testing it until they don't get that one last chance to make the best of it. So take this chance to distance yourself from your past — and make your next shot at freedom last. Get it together through bad dreams and bad weather, and then you'll see how everything slowly starts to get better — sweet dreams and sunny days! After you've made a habit of doing right, you'll see better days!

I Have To Help Myself

How I feel about people who try to change my lifestyle. I feel like nobody else can help me, because I have to help myself. The staff can tell me things about how to stay out of trouble, but I will have to be the one who does those things — because I'm the one that has to make the right choice!

Sometimes the staff here at the hall get to me though, because they swear they know you but don't know nothing about being raised in an environment where you have to sometimes do the wrong things to survive! Why I say this, is because I was raised in a house right next to a tore-down abandoned house, plus four more down the street. Really, I grew up walking down the street scared that I might get shot, robbed, or even worse — killed. I'd be walking in the middle of the street on my way to the store because broken beer and liquor bottles are on the pavement all the way down the sidewalk. Plus you are waiting for a junkie to drive down the street, just so I could get some money to buy food!

And I was doing all of this where the police don't even wanna come around. In the Booster Projects on the east side of Detroit. So that's why I say most staff don't know nothing about me, because I from a whole different place than Oakland where, yes, it's still "hood" — but we act different than people from the Bay. It's different from the Bay, period. I'm from a place where you have to carry your pistol, because if you don't, you stay in the house — and it's still not safe there! So that's why I kind of don't think staff really can help me. They can help me a little, but I got to do the right thing on my own, so I can be something in life other than a gangster, a thug, or a killer.

-Detroit, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your description of how it was for you where you grew up is harrowing! However, there are streets like that in a few parts of Oakland, too. Still, we don't doubt Detroit is different from Oakland, but that's not the point. The point is that you had to live a criminal life at a young age just to eat, and not "eat" as a metaphor "make a living" but literally to have food that day. Who can blame you for the choices you made? No one who understands, and that's for sure! Yet you're one hundred per cent correct that you need to change the choices you make in the future, because what you had to do as a youngster growing up will not keep working for you as an adult — it will certainly lead you to hospitals, jails and death. And you're right that no one can do it for you, no one can do it but you! Still, staff might be able to help you plan a job search, or talk over with you the pitfalls of trying to live with one foot in the thug life and one in the square life — 'cause whether or not they've been where you've been, they've seen an awful lot of young men pass through these Halls ... most return, some die and some stay out of the system. So maybe they've learned from watching those who've passed through here before you, what will help you and what will hurt you. Often ideas that seem to make a lot of sense, don't really make for a good plan, but you wouldn't know it from the idea, just from living it (as you point out, the truth is all in the living of it!). Stay strong. Stay up. Live long. Change up.

Change

When I look into your eyes,

All I can see are lies.

You lied to me when you said you never do me wrong

I could name more lies but my list would be long.

I hope you get caught for every thing you did,

I will never forgive you, not even before they close your coffin with the lid.

I never been hurt by some one so bad it would make me say that,

Well truth hurt, hurts worse then getting shot by a gat.

I hope you can find it in your heart to finally change for the better,

I hope you be like me and be a go-getter.

So before I close this rhyme I just wanna say,

You should really consider change or your pain will always stay!

-Nina, Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: You express some pretty strong emotions in this poem: pain, anger, even love. The reason we say love is that despite the obvious anger you have toward this person who has caused you so much pain, at the end you acknowledge that this person has their own pain. Instead of wishing bad things on them, you hope they will change for the better so they won't be in so much pain. We hope that for your own sake, you will be able to forgive this person so that bitterness and hate does not drag you down; to forgive is the greatest thing we can do for ourselves allowing ourselves to release those destructive emotions. Are you ready to begin to set yourself free? Good job on this poem!

The Past

As time goes on I sit and wait

Alone in my room 'til my next court date

This lifestyle I live is all but trashed

Where is my happiness that made up my past

Staring at four walls with a story to tell

If only you know I would be going through hell

This lifestyle I lived is now in the past

That person I was

She is gone now, she is trashed

I am a whole new girl its plain to see

I don't need drugs to be Brittney

-Brittany, Durango Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: Brittany, you obviously realize now that the lifestyle you had been living is not healthy. You are right you don't need drugs or any other negative influences to define who you are. You can find the happiness that you have experienced in the past and surround yourself with positive influences and activities.

By My Side

I've had many friends come and go.

But none of them lasted like you, ya know.

Through thick and thin you truly stayed by my side.

At times when I thought I couldn't get by.

You never doubted me once on a lick.

Even if I did it just to get lit.

Never once did you turn me away.

Even if at times I got in your way.

And on that dark night that I woke up and cried,
as I open my eyes I turned to look and it was you
by my side,

you saved me some how,

I want to thank you now.

-Pep, Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: Faithful friends are most definitely hard to come by. True friends are few and difficult to find. They are usually accepting of us just as we are, without change. The friends that you have help shape the person that you become, so choose carefully, and hold tightly to those friends that encourage you to do the right thing and accomplish your goals. In what ways can you be the type of friend to this person that they have been to you?

Global Warming

We should be glad that we know about global warming before it's too late, but aint nobody really care because it's happening at a slow rate. In an article I read, there's a new coil that will decrease the amount of carbon dioxide. If there's a solution, why not use it? Because the government don't care about us. All they care about is money. They don't care if San Francisco or New York go down in the sea some day, and the extinction of all animals. We will eventually die of starvation.

That also make me think, does God exist? If He does, He didn't create us for all of us to die. People should care because we all hope our grandchild and future generation to live and enjoy this amazing world.

-Lifer B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Yes, it is interesting that we already know that global warming can kill us all, but we're not doing very much to stop it. We agree with you, too, that the reason is money. But it's not because they don't care about New York or San Francisco because, after all, they live in those cities too, so they could die with everyone else! One thing this does prove is that knowledge is not the same thing as action. You can know that something you're doing is not good (even for yourself), but just keep doing it anyway. Why do you think that is?

CO-PIECES OF THE WEEK

Sorry

He used drugs
He thought he was a big shot thug
He didn't have a place to stay
He thought he was bad
You can tell by the expression on his face

He went to drinking
He didn't know what he was thinking
Now he was someone he didn't know
All he could do, was yell
He was really low

Everybody needs to know
He has changed and ready to go
Now he has turned around
He has quit and he is proud
So for the record
He is sorry for what occurred
He hopes you forgive him
Because he and you are part
Of the same organism

-Kyle, Durango Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: When "he" was using he didn't know who he was. Now that he has changed and turned it around who is he? What are his dreams, hopes? How does his future look?

Thanks for keeping me out of that group of so-called "good kids;" thanks for making it harder for me; thanks for taking me from my fiancé, college, and everything else I love.

Thanks For All Your Help

I know what I want to do with my life. I know where I want to be. I know who I want to be with, and who I want to be myself. The only thing at this very moment that I don't know is why "the system" continues to hold me back even though it's been well over a year and 1/2 since I've been in any trouble at all. Maybe I just have that "stamp" that says, "I'm gona help you make your quota this month."

Maybe I'm just any other number to them. I don't know...But I do know that no matter how good I do, and no matter how far away from the BS I go, I'll always be a number to them.

So thanks. Thanks for keeping me out of that group of so-called "good kids;" thanks for making it harder for me; thanks for taking me from my fiancé, college, and everything else I love. I'll be your number because, after all, you're trying to do what's "right" for me. Aren't you?

-Brandi Unit 5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We really admire the style you've chosen to write this piece. While you appear to be saying "thank you," you're actually employing sarcasm to point out that the system really doesn't have your well being as their goal. This reminds us of a speech in "Julius Caesar," a play by William Shakespeare. After Caesar is murdered, his friend Mark Antony delivers the funeral eulogy which beings, "I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him." But the REAL purpose of his speech is to condemn his audience who conspired to commit the murder. It's a very clever way of getting your message across. Now, speaking of your message, how is it that you're locked up now when you've been trouble-free for so long?

Changes

Changes can be both good and bad; from when I was young to my first year in high school I was a good kid, then you know what happened...changes.

I started partying; you know doing drugs and drinking. From there I went to gang banging, and I can tell you right now that it's nothing nice! All that came out of that life for me was Durango Detention Center.

Then years later you know what happened... changes. My girlfriend got pregnant, and I had to get my first job and handled my business.

Now I am back in here with a three month old son on the outs, and it's really sad to me that it took this long to realize everything I was doing is wrong. I am seventeen years old now, and I get out in a couple of weeks on my big 1-8. I am finally ready to make all the changes I have needed for years!

-Stephen, Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: Changes are sometimes connected to the choices that we make. What choices are you making to bring about the changes you want? In order for positive change to come into your life, you need to make positive choices. You say you are ready to make positive choices, however don't expect things to get better over night. Sometimes it takes awhile for those positive changes to come, but stick with it and don't give up!



Can't Wait

Man, I miss my girl. She's what I think about most of the time when I have my man problems. Man, I can't wait to get home to see if I'm really focused on my future and life, and I want something for myself. And I'm always gone have thug in me and ready for whatever, but I'm not gone have to show it if problems don't come my way, if I'm doing the right, than with life itself. I love my life and wish I can take what wrong I did, so I can stay away from places like this, but Moe Beezy out. I'm focused on life. Let's get it.

-Moe Beezy LCRS, SF/YGC

From The Beat: It sounds like you're determined to create a new life for yourself. We hope your love of your life and freedom will keep you calm when temptations that have caused your problems in the past try to get to you. What's your plan on staying out?

Staying Up

My plan is to get out of here and stay up and never have to look back at the life I lead, because I'm tired of coming to hellholes like the Ranch. I'm trying to see more things with my life than the life I lead in the streets. I used to think the streets were all I knew, but as I start getting locked up, I see more things and think more than I used to, and I want something for myself in the future. I'm staying up. Forget the streets.

-Moe Beezy LCRS, SF/YGC

From The Ranch: What about the outside world beyond your streets looks good to you? What does that wide world offer you that you'd like to explore, maybe become a part of? How can you take steps to enter that world? What kind of advice, help would could you use to get there?

because I'm focused on changing
my living skills into something that
going to help me in the future.

My Painful Life

pain pain go away
don't come again no other day
my life is pain, we know it's true
but what else can a hustler do
i live the way i choose to live
i do the things i choose to do
you can't tell me nothing
'cause i'm never wrong
like smoking weed out a purple bong
the streets are cruel we know it's true
but what the eff can we do
we can't do nothing so we have to adapt
and try to stay away from your enemy's trap

-Lil' Tb, 150 Crew

From The Beat: When you rule out an other option from reality, you become your own worst enemy. We know it's true, everything depends on what you choose to do. But how can you claim you're never wrong? Yeah, it is just like smoking on that bong! Your straight thinking gone up in smoke, while you giggle and laugh like it's all a joke. Refuse to look for a way to beat the system, and it's guaranteed that you'll get caught slippin' — 'cause it's all one big trap if you don't quit the game when you have the chance.

Let's Get It

Man, I'm tired of waking up in places like this.

This shhh is ugly for real—
the same shhh every morning an' evening.
Every single day

I see the same people all day,
trying to keep from slappin' anybody
that say some stupid stuff up here.

I hold in a lot of shhh and I wish I can let it out,
but if I want to go home,

I have to be somebody that I don't want to be
until I get my freedom back.

I put myself in this situation and I gotta work to get out of
here

and back to my home a different person.

Stay focused. I'm out.

-Moe Beezy LCRS, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Do you think that learning to control your frustrations and anger, as maddening as it must be, is part of growing up and will serve you well when you're free again? What is stifling your emotions doing to you that you don't like? How can you deal with having to remain calm when someone is driving you nuts, besides going off on that person? How about humor? You sound like you've learned that your freedom is worth controlling your emotions. You go!

Focused

What it do, Beat? It's ya boy, Moe Bezzy, here at the Ranch, holding it down, working out my time, making it useful, so I can leave with more thoughts in my head than I came here with. But I know it's going to be different when I touch down, because I'm focused on changing my living skills into something that going to help me in the future.

-Moe Beezy LCRS, SF/YGC

From The Ranch: Great idea. What skills, talents, education, experience and interests do you have, that you can work into your new life that may include a job and maybe, eventually, a career? If you make up your mind that whatever life you were living wasn't working for you, we hope you can devise a plan to create a new life step by step. Get any help from educational, career counselors you need!

That Night

i had a feeling i should just stay at home
'cause i knew something was gon' go wrong
that night we left we didn't return
'cause we lit that blunt and said burn baby burn
we never knew the things we did
would turn out to give us a six-year bid
but it's okay 'cause we'll make it through
i know it's true and you do too
so do not fear and we'll be home fast
'cause this down time will never last
just keep it solid and do what you do
'cause when you come home, i got you
dedicated to my ninja arnaud stay solid in the 'y'

-Lil' Tb, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Yeah, you should've trusted that feeling you had that night, but the feeling you have now is not to give up the fight 'cause you know you will be free again, both you and your friend. Remember though, it wasn't just that one night, it was the way you were living life. Sooner or later it had to go bad on you 'cause that's what that life will do. So don't just pimp your time and return to a life of crime — learn your lesson and beat the system. Use whatever's offered in a classroom or shop, to make sure after your release you'll come out on top, not the boss of the game but a success on the outs 'cause you chose to train for a legal life and rise above the game and its destructive trife!

you can't tell me nothing
'cause i'm never wrong

A Kid Committin' Petty Crimes

Once upon a time
There was kid
Committin' petty crimes
Blowin' trees and gettin' lit
But now I find myself
In this faulty situation
It's time to recognize
That I'm on my way to placement
Freedom is that thing
That I tend to take for granted
Got caught up straight slippin'
And this is where I'm landed
This juvenile hall thing
It really ain't a game, man
Before I get caught up again
It's time to change my game plan
Put it out to the minors
Locked in this facility
MCJH livin'
Feelin' pain from a guilty plea

-Truent, Marin

From The Beat: Nice poem, Truent. Why don't you write next week for The Beat details about your game plan to change your life? If you have any good ideas, the minors in juvy and everybody else who reads your poems could benefit from them.

Ron-Ron and Paco Watching Over Me

Two very important people I lost this year were Ron Ron and Paco. Ronald B. and Brian C. were stars in their own right. Ron-Ron and Paco stayed fitted and had all the Jordan's. Ron put me on to this game called life and gave me my sway and style. I had a style already. He just gave me my edge. So now my head sharp as a razor.

Now Paco, we met in the halls in 2003. Then we started hanging on the outs. Then we both ended up at camp in 2004. I mean beasin' hard and had me step my clothes game up, 'cause he stayed fly.

When Paco died, me and Ron-Ron was beatin' and said that we would do what he would of done for us. You already know. Then Ron died in August to some fake 5-0 cop. That goes to show OPD don't care.

Everyday I feel Ron-Ron and Paco watching over me. That's why I feel I'm still alive today. 'Cause every time life or death actions happen, they come to my head. I love my bras and can't nobody replace them, ever. RIP Ron-Ron and Paco!

-P-Stank 150 Crew

From The Beat: I'm too bad that had to happen to those you know and were close to. There are a lot of those tragedies happening. When the "life or death actions happen" and they come to mind, what else do you think makes them come to mind? Are you doing the things they were doing that brought them that unfortunate fate? You still have your life and we hope that you cherish and value it. You've been a first hand witness to how easily life can be taken away. Hopefully you've learned something from those tragedies!

I Hate Being Locked Up

I hate being locked up because I have to ask people can I use the bathroom. Also I got to be locked up inside a cold old room. I have to wear other people underwear. I got to ask to do everything. Also, why I hate being locked is I have to take showers with other men. I have to wear the state clothes and I have to wear they slippers. That why I hate being in jail.

-Bub Unit 4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You have listed most of the reasons why everybody hates to be locked up. Is this your first time? If so, then you've learned everything you need to know about the system, and it's up to you to stay out of it. If this isn't the first time, will it be the last time?

Can I Please Have This Dance?

I saw her walking and I just had to say something
 So I said, "Hey, girl! How you doin?
 What's your name? Can we talk for a minute?"
 And she said, "No, we can't
 And my name is none of your business."
 And I said, "Girl, stop walking
 I really wanna talk to you."
 She said, "Boy, stop talking.
 I don't wanna talk to you."
 I saw her at a party the next day
 And she said, "Hey
 I'm sorry for the way
 I treated you."
 And I said, "Hey, don't bother me
 I don't wanna speak to you."
 She said, "My name is Monique
 Sorry for yesterday"
 I said, "Girl, that's a pretty name.
 Monique, please get away."
 She said, "No, I'm sorry,"
 And "I wanna give you a chance."
 I thought real hard, and said
 "Monique, take my hand
 Can I please have this dance?"

-Eli. Marin

From The Beat: Another great, funny, touching song. You always come up with these little stories about the young ladies and you, that are really inspired. We love it when you sing to the whole workshop. Your songs and you cheer up everybody else. We bet you really don't have troubles with the ladies when you're on the outs, but if you ever do, just sing them one of your little songs.

Taking So Much For Granted

I've taken school for granted
By showing up late or not going at all
I've taken my freedom for granted
By missing court dates and screwing around
I've taken my mom for granted
By being defiant and not listening
I've taken my boyfriend for granted
By standing him up and not calling him anymore
I've taken sports for granted
By getting bad grades
I've taken my neighborhood for granted
By giving knocks to that white girl
I've taken my home for granted
By going to YGC
I've taken my job for granted
By not showing up every day

-Baby Nannah Unit 5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: It seems like you took most everything for granted, and now you're paying the price. So, the obvious question is: why? Why would you risk losing so much by not valuing it? And — far more important — how will you change your behavior to show your respect for all that you've taken for granted, including yourself?

I Never Want To Come Back

Life in juvy ain't that easy. We gotta wake up early, don't have freedom, and don't get to see our families/friends. I wish I never committed a crime, so I wouldn't have to be here. When I get released, I'm gonna start going to school and not break the law. I don't wanna come back here ever again.

-Daniel Unit 3, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Many Beat writers tell us that they wish they had never been caught so they wouldn't have to be here. You went to the next level by wishing you had not committed the crime that led to your getting caught that led to your coming here. That tells us that you are maturing into a responsible young adult who will keep his promise to go to school, not break the law, and go far. Good for you!

Keep It Real

W'at's up, Beat? Man, I'm still out here in San Francisco Jail, holdin' down. To all my ninjas in Alameda County, what good, brahs? Keep it lit, no matter what.

But today I'm goin' write Keepin' It Real. When I said Keep It Real is when ninjas be out there in the street be phony, 'cause some of y'all — this a meant for y'all. I can't say it ain't fair, 'cause some ninjas, this all they know.

But, man, you ninjas know y'all don't wanna get killed or in jail for life. Because when his blood spills, his blood kills, and that's the cycle we can't seem to break. What I mean by when his blood spills his blood kills is that when someone get killed, someone in his family goin' want revenge. Someone else goin' get killed; then someone goin' jail. So, to all the brahs, keep it real. Stop the murder rate, 'cause this ain't for us.

-Billitant Unit 3, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You're so right, Billitant. You've seen and experienced enough to see where this road leads, so if you can step off and change direction, you will be making a major step to stop the tragic cycle you describe here. A great man named Mahatma Gandhi, who stood up to the British Government to win independence for his country (India), said, "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth - pretty soon everyone will be blind and toothless."

Do You Believe In Love At First Sight?

I myself do not believe in love at first sight. Love is a trouble thing. You can love someone and they may not feel the same way. I have been in love at first sight and tried to express my self to that person. I was a young teenager when I saw her. She was so fine.

When I went to her, I stared into her eyes. I saw me and her kissing and walking together. It was the best feeling in the world, but when I went to tell her about how I felt, she looked at me like if I was a little kid. I tried to tell her what I saw. She smiled, but than laughed at me and walked off with my heart.

After that day, I stopped believing in love at first sight. Maybe I will find it again, but until that day, I will never believe in it.

-Chava B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: What you felt was not love but animal attraction. It happens all the time — to all o us. What we think you've learned is that "love" is a process, not a moment in time. You have to get to know someone from the inside out before you can really say that love is the basis of a relationship. We know that when you do discover true love, you'll know the difference! We're sorry she treated you this way, but you learned enough about her character from this interaction that you should be relieved.

How I'm feeling

Right now I'm feeling pretty good because I have just been to court and found out that I'm going to go to another drug treatment program for a whole year. The reason why I am so glad about this (even though it's for a whole year) is because at least I'm not going to the Ranch.

Something that has made me even more happy is that I'm going to ask if I can fill out a YA commitment form, meaning that I can do the good alternative of going home instead of going to my program. But if I were to mess up on my deal on going home, then that means I will go to YA. So thanks a lot Beat Within, and hopefully this will be the last time I write you. Peace!

-Aj B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Your hopes and our hopes are not quite the same. We also hope that you get to go home instead of YA, but we don't hope that this will be the last time you write for The Beat. Just make it the last time you write for us while you're locked up! Next time, you can write from freedom and lace our readers with some knowledge about how to hold onto it! We also hope that you get as much as you can from the drug program you're about to enter so that you don't have to be a slave to some chemical!

Disconnection

There is a disconnection in my life. I'm apart from my family, but no one else did it but me And now I can't take time back. I wish that I could.

But now that I did what I did, I learned my lesson that is not where I want to be.

This is my FIRST and my LAST time, on some real shhh. When I get out, I'm still going to be disconnected. I'm going to a group home in Petaluma, but I feel this is the best for me, as well as my home. Now I can tell my little bra and sister that this is not where they want to be!

-Young Weezy Unit 5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: It speaks well of you that this is your first time in here, and it speaks even better of you that you are committed to the fact that it will also be your last time in here. As for your little brother and sister, telling them that this is not where they want to be is not enough. You must live your life as a model for them to follow.

Love At First Sight

No, I don't believe in love at first sight 'cause how you know you love that person if that's the first time you saw that person. People can know when somebody look good, but can't love a person at the first sigh. You don't know where that person been or what they always do. I mean my opinion, first I'll like somebody before even thinking about love.

-Victor B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This shows a degree of maturity that tells us your relationships will be built on something solid, and not just the fantasies that come out of your own mind. We agree with you that love must be built on much more than just what a person looks like.

Ninjas Cry About The Time

Life is hard, real hard. Ninjas be coming in and out of here, not doing nothin' with they time, doing so many crimes, then cry about the time. If you not ready to get killed or stay in here for the rest of your life, get out of this life, because that's what's coming if you keep on going. So for them who cannot do time, do not do the crime.

-B Wizz Unit 3, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We assume by the simple reality of what you've written, you are not ready to get killed or stay in here for the rest of your life. Congratulations! Now, what will you do to change direction? Do you have a plan to stay out of here?

No One Was Born Violent

People wonder why I do what I do. I tell them, "Don't worry about it." So now I'm trying to get out the system, but they won't let me. So now I'm trying to find a light to the side where I began.

I began without any anger. I wasn't born violent. As a matter of a fact, no one was. Maybe if someone showed us right from wrong, I would probably never have been where I am at right now. I'm in YGC. No, it's not that bad, but I could do better than this. I think maybe I might go home and show my PO that I can do good. My PO don't believe I could, but all I got to say is, "Watch me! Watch me get off probation!"

Watch me do good in school! Watch me get a job I like, that's pays good money!"

I know for a fact that someday I'm gonna see that light, but when I do I am gonna try my best to not let it turn off. Well, all right then, y'all. My big bra in the other unit stay up.

-Young Drew Unit 3, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We believe your passion about doing good when you get out, and proving your PO is wrong about you. But words are only words, Young Drew, so the most important thing you wrote is: "Watch me." You can be sure that your PO and others will be watching you to see if you can put action behind your words. We know you can, but we don't yet know if you will. Don't disappoint yourself by failing to keep this commitment to change.

When I Look Into Your Eyes...

When I look into your eyes...

I see my mother crying, crying because I'm not at home where she knows I'm safe. It makes her cry to just know that I can't watch TV with her or with my little brother or sister.

When I look into your eyes...

I see sadness, sadness because you know I've done something real wrong, and I can't be able to come home when I choose to, able to go outside when I want to, to watch TV when I want to. And most importantly, leave this place when I want to.

When I look into my mom's eyes...

It hurts me, to know I can't see my mom when I want, whenever I want.

-Young Meel B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Why did it take you getting locked up to think about the pain you would be causing your mother if you lost your freedom? You obviously weren't thinking about her and all the sacrifices she's made for you when you chose to do whatever it was that gave the system the power to take you from her. We hope next time you're free, you remember just how much you owe her, and don't disappoint her.

2007

2007 is really gone be different for me because I'm gone change my life, my ways of doing things in life. I want to change of me doing negative things in life that would make me end up back in jail. In 2007 I want to finish school, be back at home with my family and baby mommy getting ready to have my child.

Really, in 2007 I want to be a whole new person handling my business. I want to stop hanging on ma reckless block before I end up dead or in jail doing hard time. I gotta start thinking positive for my life to be how I want it to be.

-YunJ Pitt B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We hope you follow through on your decision to "be a whole new person." You want to stop doing negative things, and that's good, but it's a very general goal. What specific changes do you see happening in your life? What specifically will you stop doing? What specifically will you start doing?

I Won't Beg

i can't live without you, you're like my other half
i try to stay positive but it's hard to laugh
we had a connection, something very strong
it used to be no one came between our bond
we made a pact to be together till the end
you was like family, way more than a friend
more like my wife than just another female
it saddens me not to receive your mail
i'm the one to blame, i let you go
i wanted you to stay but i never let it show
now you're gone, alone by yourself
and i worry 'bout you more than my health
all of my lies you seemed to believe
but i didn't believe you would leave
i always seemed to deceive
my love you never seemed to receive
i want you back 'cause it felt so right
i ain't never known to beg so you could go
without a fight
but if you go, i'll be gone forever
i'll be sad without you, in any weather

-Big Vic, 150 Crew

From The Beat: And the lyrical Vic can still hit with accuracy and power when he puts his deepest feelings into rhymes that flower and burst from the page like a tragic song that mixes beauty, sadness and wrong with a longing to fix the mistake that's left Big Vic heartsick and so alone. Yeah, well, that is to say, thanks for your love poem.

But You Still Loved Me

You never deserved the pain and hurt I gave you,
But you still loved me
I stopped going to school to be with my friends,
But you still loved me
I ran away for someone I thought cared,
But you still loved me
So when I tell you I've changed,
Can you believe me?
Because I just thought I'd let you know,
I never meant to hurt you
And mama, I still love you

-Lex Unit 5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: The reason it's so easy to hurt our mothers is because they do love us so much. You recognize now just how much your mom loves you because she has stood by you despite all your selfish acts. But her patience has been worth it if, as you mature into responsible adulthood, you begin to make a few sacrifices for her as she has made so many for you.

Learn From My Mistake

W'a't it do Beat? This be that vato Cartoon. First off, let me send my respect to all worthy. I sit here up in the maximo unit watchin' homies come in and out. Homies be going to a group home, run, come back, go to a group home, run. I tell my homies to be cool. I don't tell them to stop w'at they doing because I ain't a hypocrite. I used to do the same thing. That's before. Now I'm going to CYA. It nada for me but I ain't tryin' see my homie go where I'm going. I tell them learn from my mistake.

Well, I got to go. One love. Alrato

-Cartoon B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We're not sure which mistake of yours you want your homies to learn from. When we sit and talk to you, we're not sure what you have learned from your own mistakes. We're also curious to know your definition of those "worthy" of your respect. And finally, if going to the Y is "nada" for you, then why do you care if your homies go there or not?

Why Family Don't Visit In Jail?

I don't know why people always got to turn their back on you when you come to jail, but when you out and got that money — they going to be all up in your face trying to ask for things all the time!

This is an example: My sister was always asking me for things when I had all kinds of money, but as soon as I come to jail — it's a whole different story. The same person who I gave money to and did things for, now can't take two hours out of two days a week to come visit me! But she would be quick to see one of her ninjas, if they came to jail! But I'm not mad. I just know when I touch down, she will be the last person I think to go see.

But I'm good. I'm just up and here with my cousin Triv. We're just tryin' to keep our heads up — that's all. I got fifty more days left until I turn eighteen and I'm off to Rita. And from there, to the pen! I just wish my life and my family members didn't turn out this way.

And I just want to tell everybody: Don't do nothing stupid that's going get you put in jail for the rest of your life, far away from your family. Just think before you act.

-Lil' Man Man, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We don't know your sister, but we have observed that many young people seem to define their universe by who they're seeing everyday (or most often), whether it's the crowd they kick it with or an individual they choose to spend time with. Yeah, they love family, but it's like they didn't choose their family, so it somehow means less to them — at least until they learn better, till time teaches them that family is forever while the faces you kick it with just come and go, which is to say, keep changing. You learn this when you come to jail, if you stay long enough. How many friends are writing you? On the other hand, you do expect more from family, and when they let you down, it hurts even more than those fair-weather friends who disappear from your life. Maybe you should mail this piece to her and let her know your feelings, not just your anger but that you miss her and want to see her — let her know that family is forever, but only if family members respect it! Of course, it's still best to stay out of jail, but since you're going to the pen, let your sister know how you feel. Maybe she'll remember she loves you and show up.

My Mind In '08

2006 and 2007 will be the same because I'm still going to be locked up in a facility. But in 2008, that will be my new start. I'm going to go to college. I'm going to start listening to my parents. I'm going to have a clearer mind after I get out, and I'm going to start making better decisions instead of going back to the block like a dummy.

-Lifer B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: If you follow through on all these promises, your future should be much brighter than your past. One thing though, Jason... you don't have to wait until you're free to start preparing for it now. For example, if you plan to go to college next year (2008), then use this year to prepare yourself by studying, reading, and figuring out what you want to study in college in order to have that job that will allow you to live the life you want to live.

I Blew It

During school I always wanted to play sports (basketball) for my school. I always went to try outs. I always made it. But then when the coaches looked at my grades, they said I couldn't play because I have to maintain a grade point average of 2.0. I couldn't achieve that goal. So I think I blew it. I have a lot of talent wasted on nothing because of my grades.

-Anthony, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It isn't wasted yet! Don't you think that you can work on getting your grades up so you could play? If you really want to show your talent you will do what's necessary in order to do so. Don't give up too soon because there's still a way you can go about making it happen.

This Grind

I wanna say how I feel
Like, forget it
I want some money
'Cause I need it in my pocket
My life, my life, my life
Gotta stop and think for a minute
'Cause my wife
I love her
Wanna keep her satisfied
But something inside of me
Wanna keep that hustla's grind
I close my eyes
Breathe to ten
But when I open 'em
I still see everything
Go around again
Is it a test?
If it is
I hope I pass
Don't wanna get bitten
By a darn snake
In the grass
I gotta choice to make
To live on the right path
But if I go left
I know I'm a crash
Relinquish that
Not the person I am
So I gotta keep my head up
And be the best I can

-Famoso LCRS, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You're facing the same decision that many in juvy and out are looking at, Famoso. Are you going to take your chances and stay in the streets or relinquish that life and create your own, probably including a job, family, your education, etc? You sound like you've given the streets a try, so you know that life. Have you also tried to make it in the "straight" world? If so, how did it work out? If not, why don't you?

When I Look Into Your Eyes...

When I look into your eyes, I see an iris, pupil, cornea, etc. I don't see too much, except a piece gelatin connected with vein's, encased inside a socket, connected by an optic nerve attached to a brain that processes waves of light to configure information and transform it into a picture it perceives, which forms picture of my eye.

But then again, that sentence — When I look in to your eyes" — can mean any amount of things. It's what you make it.

-Unsigned B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Well, whoever you are who wrote this scientific description of what you see when you look into someone's eyes didn't really teach us anything we didn't already know. When we look into your eyes, we see someone who has the intelligence to write a much more meaningful piece. And that's what we're hoping for!

Same Thing

There are many that tell me the same thing, some of them telling me from experience others just saying what they think is right for me. Though all of these people tell me positive things that I knew even before they told me, life makes it hard for me to make the right choice sometimes.

Even though I know most of us know right from wrong, at the time, when something is happening, wrong might seem like our right choice. If the choice that we made got us in trouble with our parents or with the law that is when we realize that the choice we made at the time may have been right we know that we could've went about another but maybe that way could've been harmful to us so we do what we think is best for us.

Being incarcerated in juvenile hall I have thought about the choices I have made and honestly I didn't have to do them. Even though people make the choice to sell drugs or do illegal things for money maybe that is the only choice they have.

-Deonta, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Tell us more about how life makes it hard to make the right choices. You have so much wisdom to share.

You Blew It

I took my freedom for granted: I never in 2 million years knew I was going to end up in juvenile hall. It feels like yesterday I was at home playing Madden NFL '06 and talking on the phone with girls, now I'm here stuck in a cell.

On the night of November 26, 2006, I was at my house playing Madden, talking to my girl and my friend knocks on my window and tells me to come outside. As I'm walking outside she tells me to get in this car that was supposed to be hers, so I do.

Now I'm driving and for about 30 to 45 minutes and then a police car starts to follow us, my heart started to beat fast and faster. I have never been so scared in my life, but I kept driving. As I did so, I guess the police was running the plates because they didn't pull us over, so I kept driving, but when I looked back that's when karma started. There were five police cars behind us. Right then and there I regretted getting in the car.

It turns out the car was stolen and I'm the only one in juvenile hall. It's now December 5, 2006 and I'm still in here, in a cell wondering when I'm getting out. I guess I took my freedom for granted.

-Raymond, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It sounds like you also took the trust between you and your friend for granted too — and your friend took advantage of you by not being honest about the car. Would you have gotten in the car if she'd told you it was stolen? If yes, tell us why. If not...also tell The Beat.

RIP Davon

Man, something I took for granted was my ninja, Davon! I didn't do nothing bad or nothing, but I didn't show him all the love a real ninja was supposed to.

Like me and my other ninjas use' to be smokin' or something, and we would go smoke wit' him on EM. Anytime he was in trouble or had funk, we was right there. Or when we got kicked out of school, we was like, "Forget that shhh! We to the turf."

The point I'm trying to make is: We looked out for the negative and never the positive. Now my ninja gone. The last time I seen my brah, he was on the block, and he was like, "Cut, D-bo!" And I was like, "You got me flucked up!" But he was like, "It's too much shhh going on! I ain't saying it in a bad way, brah. I love you." And I just left. — I love you lil' brah: RIP Davon.

-D-bo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Man, you got it right about folks not looking out for the positive, not showing love like that. Your story has a sad and humble ending, where Davon's love for you shines clear, but you didn't tell him: If it's like that, you need to get off the street till things calm down a little bit. We are not saying it's your fault he got shot and killed, but we are saying that too often the negative is accepted as given, and no one will say a word to the next about quittin' or right livin'. We don't mean at that late moment, but earlier on in Davon's short life. For the rest of your loved ones, we mean right now. You've got to change the meaning of "real ninja" from ready-to-funk for you, to telling loved ones the truth. It's time for you to change and be a model to youth, be living proof a ninja can be real and quit the game before he get' killed — or live his life as a slave to the system in some prison.

Don't Tell Me To Change

A lot of people told me to change or have actually tried to change me but I can't change because this is the way I was brought up to be and I have to make the most of it because all these people that try to help me are not coming from their heart. They just tell me to change because they make money talkin' to me and I just listen to all the crap that they're telling me because they don't even know me to be telling me to change and I am going to do what I do until someone else tell me to change and it comes from the heart.

-Roberto, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You make such an important point. A lot of adults working with youth do more talking than listening. They care about you generally as a human but don't know YOU and all your unique qualities because they've got 30 kids on their caseload or are just looking for the paycheck. It is easy to talk and hard to take action. But really, no matter what any one says, even the most caring "from the heart" person, only you can tell yourself to change. If you don't want it, you'll keep cycling in and out of the hall or worse. If you want it, all you have to do is ask a few people for help. The hard part is wanting it, from the heart.

Life

Life for me so far has been hard, so hard sometimes I want to cry. I lost so many of my loved ones—family, friends, girlfriends, all the shhh. But things look like they might turn around for me, but then it's like all I do just backfires on me.

In my dreams, I live a life that I think about all the time—a place where I don't have to look over my shoulder, where I feel safe, where I feel at home with my family. I hate that I live a lie sometimes. I try to keep it real with myself and others, and it's working for me. I love life.

-Cash Money LCERS, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Can you figure out why your life has been backfiring on you, Cash Money? Some people think that anything that starts out "wrong," always ends up "wrong," so if what you're doing on the outs is messed up, is that why the results are betraying you? How can you create the life you dream of, where your family and you are safe? Will you have to give up that lie to create a new, real life? If so, can you do it? We hope so.

What I Think

You really wanna know what I think?

I think you wouldn't rather see me float but sink.

I take responsibility for my actions whatever I do, it doesn't help when you put me down and never encourage, it's always people like you.

I think you wish I was better off dead, coming from my own mother's mouth isn't that what you said?

Yes it is, don't lie I was 12 when you said it, you was threatnin' a divorce with my step dad though you'd probably regret it.

Well moving on you really wanna know what I think?

I think you're fake, and all the bad qualities about you I begin to link.

You see it's become a pattern though YOUR family, but see I'm gonna break that link really you'll see.

But here's the serious one ya'll really wanna know what I know in a rhyme?

Can't nobody write poetry better then mine!

-Nina, Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: Unfortunately there are a lot of people in this world who are going to try to drag you down and keep you from fulfilling the potential that you have. Sometimes we have people in our lives who support us and believe in us, like our parents or close friends! When people doubt you, don't let it get you down. You can rise above the negativity, and, like you say in this poem, break the bad patterns in your family. Don't get discouraged or stop believing in yourself. Focus on your goals and on improving the talents that you have, and let the negative comments go.

She Is Everything To Me

What's up with it Beat. It's your homeboy Conflict. I have a baby now. You know her name is Selena Maria S. She's beautiful. The only messed up thing is I only got to hold her once. That's when she was born on September 15, 2006. I understand that I should stop gang banging, but it's hard. I can't just walk away and I really don't want to. It's a life I lived for 7 years and grew up around all my life. It's a part of me, but she is everything to me. She means more to me than gang banging. Maybe it's time to walk away, or at least take a break. It's just something I love to think about.

I just want my daughter to know I love her and daddy will be home soon. To her mom Cynthia, I love you too baby. I'll be home with both of you in awhile.

-Conflict, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We're always faced with decisions in life. At times we make the wrong decision and end up regretting it later. We believe you'll make the right decision and can stand by it. It is hard! But it's up to you and what do you value more?

Staying On Top of Yo' Game

Yeah, this Mar Mar coming at y'all from Camp, doing my thang. But you got to stay on top of yo' game up here. They try to set you up, then try to be yo' friend.

And staff, watch out for staff, because they will get you good with hella write-up's that push yo' home pass back more. But stay away from people that's doing bad, because staff talk to them all day! So that mean, stay to yo'self up here, and you go home a lot faster if you do that.

This is day in and day out. So come up here and do yo' program, not no one else's. Stay on top, if you got game! You feel me?

-Mar Mar, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Hey, beautiful job of telling it like it is at Camp and lacing up the ones waiting to come to Camp from the Hall on how to make it through. But you forgot to tell them to stay busy — volunteer for jobs, sports, programs, whatever there is to keep you occupied, 'cause boredom is dangerous at Camp and puts you in the hands of the ones you want to stay away from. Sure, staff watch you work or play sports, but not like they watch you kickin' it with the "bad boys" who will not be watching your back.

Juvenile Hall

The Hall has not helped me at all. What helped me was the staff — because they stop us and talk. They point out what we have been doing wrong. They tell us about the kids that they seen come to the Hall a lot, and now when they think of them, they're dead and gone because they did want to listen.

The Hall has not done nothin' good, because they bring us here, give us food, and put us to sleep. Now how is that supposed to help you get better for when you get out? How is you gon' get better not takin' classes or seein' what you did wrong and what effect it had on people and their families. When all we do is kick back, roast, and watch movies in school — you learn the same shhh back to back!

But the staff show you what you missin'! They try to bring in little things that you miss, and they give them to you: food, soap, toothpaste, movies — the movies that people on the outs is lookin' at! You feel me? But the Hall? It can kiss my dog's ash, because it don't do nothing for me!

-Kash Money, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's great to hear staff getting some credit for what they do for the youngsters they work with, and for them above and beyond the job's requirements! So often we get pieces hating on staff merely because they have rules to enforce for the group's well-being. Then, every so often, someone writes a piece like this — and we believe it makes a big difference to staff when they get recognized and appreciated in our pages by detainees who live with them day in and day out. Major props to you for giving thanks where thanks is due! Let's hope the "services" at the Hall improve at the new location — time will tell.

Lightweight Stressing

What's poppin', Beat and Beat readers? This your boy Baby Jesus from Oakland. Well, yeah, I'm up here in this max unit waiting on that Y.A. bus to come get me so I can get started on my lil' three-year sentence. And I guess you can say I'm lightweight stressing — but hey, "flunk it"! Right? It's not like I have a choice. And even if I did, I just want to get up out of this Juvenile Hall!

Oh yeah, anyways, I'd like to ask The Beat to please not change around what I write — that ain't cool! I was hella mad last week when I read one of my so-called pieces! That shh didn't even sound like what I wrote! So with that being said, and off my chest — "Ya better not change my shhh around no mo!" — let me drop a couple of lines on this bootsy-ash topic. You know what? Never mind!

This topic ain't even worthy of my thoughts or concentration. So instead I'm gonna let ya in on what I was getting into in the unit I was in before I came to max. Yeah, I was in there with my lil' cousin Sisco and one of my homeboys, Hollowtip. I was in there with a couple other so-called homies, but you know, I ain't gonna put them out there — Porkey and Guero! Well, now that it's said, them two cats was going out big time! I wasn't really trying to associate with them after what I witnessed — but enough of that. I'm 'bout to let ya go back to whatever it is ya was doing.

-Baby Jesus, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We're here to invite you to do some thinking, to exercise your mind with some new thoughts — not even decisions, just thinking things through. But that's what you seem to be refusing to do, just putting out the same old line that got you here doing time. As long as that's what you're doing, you can expect us to continue to edit your criminal-gangster turf-calling ballyhoo — a few of our friends associated with your crew have been buried behind that talk, too; so you can hate on us if that's what you want to do, but we refuse to aid and abet in the next young man's death, including your own. You feel? Probably no. But it's love we offer whether you feel it or not. So if your piece doesn't sound like "you" then think about it, 'cause we're just trying to take the killing spree out of The Beat. But then you say it's "not worthy" of you. Well, "ride and die", is not something we want to see you do.

Revolving Door

It's me Lil' G. Locked up again for some dumb shhh. I've been doin' the same shhh over and over but now I'm tryin' to break the cycle.

Today is my first day back in the hall. In two days is my birthday on 12-7 and I'm going to be sixteen. I've been ridin' on ninjas, gettin' money and messin' with females. But now I'm caught up. Now I am at a stop in my life.

People tell me I have potential and I can do something with my life. And it's true I can, but I'm caught up in a revolving door known as the system. Why can't I get out and get on with my life? Why is it that all my good deeds never show but the bad ones land me here? Now what can I do but wait for a man to judge my life. A person that has made mistakes and has problems like others but passes judgment on others. But as far as what I take for granted, I'd say my mother and freedom.

'Till the next time from your local neighborhood.

-Lil' G, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Maybe your good deeds are showing. Maybe your good deeds have left you a window to escape the system because you don't have a serious charge yet. Think positively, and you'll see there's still a chance for you to make a life changing choice. Don't let the system make that choice for you. Do what is necessary to get up and out of the system!

Reading

Well on the outs I would never pick up a book. Now I love reading books, now they are interesting and my reading skills have improved a lot. It's also teaches you to be responsible, and you go from a boy to a young man.

-Jésus, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's good to hear — they tried to lock you up, and it worked, but you found a key that will make you freer than any judge. Once you take reading seriously, you realize that no knowledge and no information can ever be kept from you, you now have access to every secret people wouldn't want you to know. So what are you reading? What's the best book you've read recently? What would you recommend for other detainees?

What I've Blown

What it is, Beat! Me, man, thinking about life and the choices I've taken — hear me out! Really though, it's a confession of what I blew, from grapes to mistakes. On the real tip, life throws curve balls, but it's how you take it that blows it up or make' it more than what it is.

Me, I done did some silly stuff, off the wall-ass shhh! Freedom, something we've all taken for granted, is what I've blown, due to the fact that I didn't place real value on it — 'cause you don't recognize the light until you've been in the dark; and in a way, the lights are fading to a dimly lit, closet-sized space I ain't tryin' to see!

Now though, it's time for a change, because I realize what I've given up for things that don't really matter: from guns to drugs, and home invasions to jewelry heists; but everything I've worked for, in value means nothing when it comes to freedom! So, like I said before ... Beat, it's time for a change.

-Lil' Rod Rodney The Kid, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You write with such wisdom and maturity, it's almost hard to believe how lost in the dark you were out there in the light of freedom, and now that the darkness of your decisions is coming to take physical form (in that "dimly lit, closet-sized space" you visited in the Hall and that they hold on reserve for far too many who spend the rest of their lives in a SHU — security housing unit — in the pen), it's our wake-up call. Maybe it's that you're sharp enough to recognize the time-delay factor that escapes so many others who can't see past the moment. You brought darkness into the light when you were out there doing what was not right, and now you are bringing light into the darkness from which you will emerge, a changed man ready to serve the cause of freedom, no longer enslaved to greed when you've seen where it was leadin'. Thanks for a truly great piece! Now follow through with your newly enlightened beliefs.

I Messed Up

For the past four and a half years I came to juvenile hall 12 times, and each time I told my mom, "I'm gonna stay home an' I'm gonna stop smoking crys, and I'm gonna go to school," and some more bs. But now I'm 15 years old, six and a half mouths pregnant, in here till I'm nine months. So all you little homies that 11or12, y'all don't want to be here. It ain't no place you want to be. Especially when you seven months pregnant, feet swole, back hurtin', hungry baby jumpin' off the damn walls. So y'all think it's cute to be in here. It ain't, but if y'all ain't wanna listen that's somethin' you're gonna learn... some day.

-Guerra Unit 5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Of course we agree with the excellent advice you are trying to give. But if you couldn't convince yourself after a dozen attempts, how do you think your message will get through to those children? As you look back on the last five years, what do you think could have helped you the most to keep your promise to yourself? We hope you haven't done any drugs since you were pregnant, and we hope even more that you will use this clean time to build on, so that you don't have to go back to that deadly — and we do mean deadly — drug! We have the feeling that if you're able to kick that one, the rest will fall into place.

Dreamed My Death

I've had a dream about the way that I'm going to die. It's the same dream every time, so I have started believing my dream. I think God is trying to tell me how I'm going to die and why. I also think God is trying to tell me to do everything I want to do and have fun before I die.

This dream also makes me be more aware of my surroundings, like who's around, what car's driving by. I think by staying on my toes, the situation might click in my head, like, "Man, this is how I'm supposed to die! So let me get ready."

So far, I know I'm going to get shot at night by two ninja's in black hoodies. I'm a be lying in the middle of a intersection by my cousin's house in Oakland. Since I know I'm supposed to get shot, I keep a pistol wit' me — 'cause I plan to shoot back. I ain't going out like a mark. I'm gonna try to take one of them, if not both of them, ninjas wit' me.

-Black, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We'll agree with you that this may very well be a message from God, a prophecy! But the Bible teaches us that God's prophecies do not simply predict what will happen — God's prophecies tell you what is going to happen IF YOU DON'T RETURN TO GODLY WAYS. You know a loving and merciful God of Love, does not want you out there strapped and ready to shoot. Nor does God want you falling in a hail of bullets. God is telling you to change your life so you can live long and well, have your share of fun — but quit living your life like you're already in hell!

Better Way

I've been through the worst
growing up on these streets my life been like a curse
attracted to sick beats and dropping a quick verse
no time to rehearse
what was said in my lines
'cause just like that my mind
got anotha rhyme, quick to flow
my meaning of that is to let it all go.
I can care less about what everyone else has to say.
'Cause to me they'll never be able to say it in a better way.

-Pep, Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: You seem to have a natural talent for rhyme and rhythm. What is it you have learned from this tough life you have lived to this point and who can benefit from this experience? Keep writing good flows, and use them to influence your culture, your peers in a positive way. Words are powerful, so be careful how you use them. Keep writing!

Camp Is Cool, But ...

camp is cool but
ninjas always actin' a fool
i go home on the weekends
hoping my time hurry up and go by
i keep my head up
and don't let nothin' get me down
i try not to let these fake-ash ninjas
get to me but they act
like a bunch of females
always crying to staff
about petty stuff but
claim to act like they are hard
and that gets under my skin
that's why sometimes
i write to the beat within
i would like to say hey
to every staff in
'd' unit, max three, and 'c' unit
ya boy, new owlz
doing good at camp
and too, what's up to the people
i was in the units wit'
keep y'all head' up

-Young Chase, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Positive is as positive do, and that's why it sounds like what you say is true — you are doing good at Camp, even surrounded by these fools. But we think your stereotype of females needs to be revamped. They don't act like your peers at Camp. So check your facts and do your do, 'cause you got a class act, and you're sure to come through intact.

Blessed

I've been blessed
with the best
and never fail
I do the most even when I'm in jail
so to you rappers that say you can't, you can
get it together boy make a plan
'cause right now you battling a thug
of these pages quick to slug,
without no hesitation,
man steady wastin' they time
while I'm sittin' writin' first thing that comes to mind.
I'm quick to devour
you all with all my power
I make grown man fall to the floor with a loud thump
to me it ain't no thang
but you'll be lookin' like albums, on the ground
that's what you get disrespectin', now bow down.

-Pep, Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: With this challenge you recriminate / We are somehow lacking, your words insinuate / A belief in ourselves or is it abilities? / You seem to possess innate sensibilities / The power of your words may lay us out / But we won't give up without a shout / That you are blessed with skills is evident / But we wonder what is your intent / To lift others up or lay them down? / Pride can level us without a sound / Is it competition or to collaborate / That we need to settle the slate? / Unequal odds in life we ignore / Taking advantage of weaknesses we score / Is this really the right approach? / Down in life, reaching for the roach? / It is possible to bring others out / Of hopeless, heartless doubt / Use your strengths to spread more hope / To all the young ones within your scope.

You Blew It

I took football for granted. I was very interested in it then I started smoking, letting girls interfere during my football practice, then my grades started falling behind. Next thing I knew I was kicked off the team. Then I started realizing that I was making a big mistake.

-Lt, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's so great when no one has to tell "I told you so" but you just have important realizations on your own. That's great, so now tell us what are you going to do to get back on track? Action speaks!

The Lessons I've Learned

What's good Beat? This that boy, Beam, writing to let everyone locked up know what I've learned from the time that has been taken away from me by my making mistakes. I've learned that time is precious and it can't be given back.

And if you don't want to be locked up, don't do wrong — 'cause if you get caught, the clock never stop' ticking. The time it takes you to commit a crime, ain't nothing compared to the time you gon' be getting. I've learned that it's easy to get in the system, and once you' in it, you gon' have to do your best to get out. I've been in it since September of 2004, back when I was still thinking it was cool to be ridin' in them stolens. I've learned my lesson about them, and I stopped stealing cars after I got caught the second time — and I buried the car thefts in the dirt and put 'em to rest!

But after I stopped that, a whole year later I got blamed for a robbery I didn't commit, all because I was in the area when it happened. I started to take it to trial, but my public defender said that if I pleaded guilty I would get out — so that's what I did. But now I've learned that was a mistake on my part! It was a set up for the system to keep me on their roster!

I've learned from my mistakes. I hope everyone incarcerated will learn from theirs and let everything in the past be in the past — just look forward to a better future and know that you still got time to become a better person. I'm fed up, so I'm goin all-out on the system! To everyone, keep y'all heads up and beat the system, 'cause us comin' to jail is their profit, and that's what they want for us to do! Be smart! Pimp yo' probation and get off — zoom! Gone. See ya. Peace. To the system, I drop one finger.

-Beam, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's fine to flip off the system, but the key is what you've learned about what you did do and didn't. Really this is a piece that has so much to teach, even about what to do with that anger — 'cause even if your public defender meant to do you right, the system does seem rigged to keep you in danger, at risk for future cases and time spent in similar places! No more stolen cars is a major decision, and even if you got caught up again, we can't tell you how impressed we are with it — 'cause for most it's like an addiction, and every time you "get away with it" it takes away your power to make a contrary decision next time until it has completely enslaved your mind, and you do it without even thinking or trying. So, again, major props! Also we hope you've learned that there are areas where it just is not cool to post up and kick it, even if you're not doing anything wrong, when the po-po come along, you can get caught up wit' it. It's not fair, it's not right, but it's there, clear as a billboard and bigger than life. So make that better future, and write us from the outs about how your freedom suits ya!

I Might Be Hardheaded, But

The reason I ain't going to come back is because I know when I don't like something that is going to keep me from my family.

I ain't the type of person that is going to mess up and keep doing the same thing that keeps me away. Basically I learn from my mistakes: I might be hardheaded but I ain't stupid --and I will make myself do the right thing, because I love my mom.

The other thing that makes me different is after I get out the out of the group home I'm going to be a uncle and I don't want to be a messed up role model. I want to be a good uncle that is showing the babies the right road to go down, so the other thing that makes me different is that I'm not only going to have worry about my life being good, but also my sister's kid.

-Lil' Tweety, 150 Crew

From The Beat: There is something about the confidence in your writing (and not just that killer handwriting) that give us a lot of faith in you — we believe that you will follow through on the things that you write here, and that you will be a great uncle as well. Even though we hope to never see you in the Hall again, we will be happy and honored to print your work in The Beat Without if you write us to tell us how you are adjusting to life on the outs.

Real Life

why ninjas gotta snitch
why they gotta talk to the feds
why they gotta run their mouth
like i'd talk to my girl on the phone
what do they get out of snitching
out of talking — they're supposed
to keep it real and keep their months shut
now i know when i do stuff
do it by myself 'cause if i do it by myself
they ain't got nothin' on me
— but i'm done with the game
i'm tryin'a get something done in my life
because this way i'm going is not the right way
i gotta be on a new path for my younger siblings
i got four younger sisters and two little brothers
and they look up to me —
since i'm in jail my brother
wanted to come too and i'm upset
when i saw him in the same county fit as me
i almost didn't recognize him
my dad ain't around so i gotta be the man
moms ain't got a job — welfare
ain't payin' her too much to raise seven of us
so i gotta get outta here and make somethin' happen
get a real job because the street life ain't right
that is the end and this is main-e-bo

-Main-e-bo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You do a nice spin turn, like a runner that starts to run right into the tackle and then spins the other way to the open field. We mean, the first lesson you draw from your bitter experience is that you need to go solo-bolo in the game so no one knows your business. But that's the old you who could see no way out of the game — and then you experienced the pain of seeing your little brother if not in shackles and chains at least fitted like every other detainee in the hall, and it didn't feel good at all. Thank God you saw you role in it all and now you're ready to change. But still that first part stands like a danger sign, how quickly you can slip back into your old trouble-making mind. Yes, your family needs you to leave the scandalous game of sin that no one ever really wins in your past — change your ways and get some legal pay at last! It's up to you to see it through.

This Is Called: Life

Sometimes people think the wrong way, and that's not good — 'cause sometimes the way you think, that's the way you wanna be, or, the way you act is the way you think. That's why you should just try to get into some good things.

I am not trying to tell y'all what to do, but that shhh is not cool! 'Cause where we live this shhh is going to be here, if we here or not — that's what we got to think about. It's like someone tell you to do something and you do it and — you gon' to be gone and they gon' to be here! That's why you got to go wit' your first mind, not no one else's opinion. You got to be the one to think about what you do before you do it. Then you will get somewhere in life. I had to change my life. Before, my life was not cool. But you got to wake yo' game up! That's all I am gon' say. I'm out. Just think about it before you do it.

-Young Life, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The thing about first mind, is that it depends on habits, those things you've done so often that you do it now without thinking. What folks call "first mind" is that warning voice before you do what has become "second nature" to you — it feels natural to you because, as detainees keep writing it in The Beat: "It's all I know." Well, first of all, it usually isn't all they know, but even if it is — from here in the system, if you don't make some changes, you know your second nature ("all you know") will just lead you to more jails, hospitals and death. So, yeah, it starts with making an effort each and every day to think before you do. But also you have to practice changing how you think altogether, from the little things you say and do, all the way to the critical decisions. You have to develop good habits to replace the bad habits that keep bringing you to lockdown, or back to that life style that keeps bringing you to lockdown. Only when you have some good habits in place and they have become second nature to you — will you have the odds in your favor, whatever the obstacle: For now you have both "first mind" and "second nature" working on the same side of the street, the sunny side that keeps you outside and free!

Iono

Being in love is a good thang, but when you locked up it's another: Because you don't know what yo' wifey doin' on the outs.

She says she's not doin' nothing wrong, but she kickin' it with yo' homeboy and homegirl. See, she do understand that if my homeboys or someone get in some drama she can get hurt -- which I neva want to happen. She think it's all about fun.

I be tellin' her to stay away from them, but no, she wants to have fun. And she could be at the wrong place at the wrong time. My Mom be tellin' her too. Iono, it's like when I talk to her on the phone she be all goodie-goodie, be like, "I promise babe, I ain't doin' nothin' on me and you", but then when like my Mom comes to see me, she tells me "Yup, she went out, didn't come home until like 2 or 3."

Well anyways, there's more than that. I'm gonna just drop it down. My girl and I have been together for 9 months, I been in here for three months today. She says she loves me but yesterdays I called her and she hung up on me. So Iono, people be tellin' me shhh. But I don't want to listen.

I guess I should start listening and do what I got to do, instead of her havin' me in here, stressin' and gettin' me mad. Can y'all believe she asked me to marry her? I really don't want to, because I don't want to hold her down. I don't think she's ready to settle down for a ninja in jail. She says that she's gonna wait for me, but it's bad. I ain't trying to be in jail stressin' off a girl no more, when I know she's gon' be out there cheatin' on me. Even though she has a tattoo of Tina Loves Mike, it don't mean nothing.

I'm gonna go with that so stay up. One love to my bruh bruh (Lil Vee) . I'll always love you.

-Mike Jonez, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Damn, we wish we had an answer for you, because this kind of love trouble just seems like something that can tear a person apart.... You're probably not the only one in the Hall going through this kind of stress, it's the cruelest part of imprisonment, the separation from the people we love. You can't protect her from danger, you can't protect yourself from getting burned ... since writing this, have you got more thoughts about whether you should agree to marry her or not? Have you worked out some of the trust issues? We (and other Beat readers) will be following the saga in these pages, secure in the knowledge that no matter what comes up, you'll keep doing what you've been doing: Facing up to it with heart.

Resolution

In the New Year I'm gone change everything that I did in 2006.

The stuff I'm going to change is like smokin' drinkin' robbin' stealin' poppin' pills and also messin' with these girls. Most of all I'm gon' stop comin' to jail. I might even stop hangin' with the bad guys on the block. Most of the people I hang with I'm not gone be wit' in 2007.

I might even stop calling the girls I was talkin' in to in 2006, I'ma go to school every day like I was before. The New Year is going to be a new life for me. I hate the old me because I used to do a lot of stupid stuff in streets, that's why I'm in here now. Maybe the New Year will bring a new person out of me. I hope everyone that reads this changes for the New Year. I'm gon' feel like a new person when the new year comes. I hope a lot of things change for the new year.

-Mac Dre Jr., 150 Crew

From The Beat: By the time you read this, it will be the new year already, and so now you tell us, do you feel like a new person? We tend to think that maybe the "new" you might be the true old you -- the you which you were when you were still more innocent, and when you hadn't yet gotten yourself into trouble. If you could reconnect with that person -- the good person who had big dreams for himself, you might find that what you're really connecting with is not the new you, but the TRUE you. Peace.

I Blew It

i blew it when i ran from my group home
i blew it when i didn't write for the beat
i blew it when i cheated on my girlfriend
i blew it when i started smokin' weed
i blew it when i lied to the police
— i blew it

-Precious Love, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Every one of these can be fixed, not in the past but in your future (and if not with your ex, then with your next).

Scared By Freedom

What's up, Beat? Me, not so good. Well, my probation officer came to see me today. She told me that I was leaving sometime this week. For some reason, I'm kinda scared that I'm leaving.

I've been here seventy-plus days, and I'm just scared that I'm gon' run from the group home when I get there! At this point I'm used to the juvenile hall routine even if I still don't like it. And I'm just worried that going to a group home means freedom, not because I don't want to be free but I'm afraid that I'll take advantage of the privileges offered there — and I'll end up running.

I miss my girl and my mama, and especially my little bruh! And I wanna do right. So, when my time is up at the group home, I can enjoy those things without having to always look over my shoulder or live that life on the run.

-Malina, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You've done seventy-plus days here, and you don't want to have to do it all over again after running from your placement, and while you completely understand your situation intellectually, you also know that you act out on impulse and can be your own worst enemy. We hope you can use your time in placement to work on that problem, because going home to your loved ones will present you with even more freedom to abuse if that what you should choose to do. Use your group home time, to learn the arts of self-discipline, patience, and responsibility, and when you finally go back to your loved ones, you'll be prepared to stay with them and never come back to the Hall.

I Have Been Taking Everything In My Life For Granted

Yes, I have been taking everything in my life for granted: my family, my home, my education and, most of all, my freedom. I went out and did something stupid.

I went and robbed some people and got caught for it. I went to court and they placed me in Alameda County Juvenile Hall. Now I can't even leave my room if I was going to piss on myself. When I eat, I eat when staff says I can eat. When I brush my teeth or shower, it's when staff says I can.

Now I can see how much my bed, which is not a bed because it's a couch, means to me on the outs. I have taken so many things for granted that I thought I didn't care about. I miss arguing with my big sister and the smell of my nine-month-old nephew's dirty diapers. I hated that smell! But now there's nothing I wouldn't give to smell that again.

I used to complain about how I had to come in early, but now I'm always in! Well, I'm getting out on the thirteenth, and seeing as it's now the fifth, I'm looking forward to smelling dirty diapers very soon!

-Dexter, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We have to say, we've quoted your line about diapers many times before your piece even hit the page! You say it all so clearly that anyone with a heart and half a brain will also love dearly even those very things he complained about when he was still free on the outs. In fact, the ones who write about missing getting high and drunk, hoo'riding and funk, are the ones who don't have a clue of what's really worth missing or how to stay free — 'cause they're already lost on a mission, already made the decision they won't stay home for long. That's why they always end they're pieces with "Stay strong". They need to say, stay smart, not just with head but with your heart. Thank you for showing them where to start!

I Have Always Wanted To Learn About Love.

I have always wanted to learn about love — how do you know when you love someone in your family? Like what if you were in love with someone: How would you feel? What feeling do you have? I mean, I've liked someone a lot before, but I never caught that feeling love. Or, I probably have, but I just didn't know.

I also always wanted learn about other sports besides basketball, like soccer, for example. How do you play it? What are the basics of the game? I've tried to play it many time, but I never really got it. I guess because I never had anyone to teach me about it.

It's a lot of other things that I want to learn about, too. Oh yeah, I also wanted learn about the rap game. What does the artist do behind the final product, before they shoot the video? Do they always write their lyrics or does someone else write it for them?

-Demarcus, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Taking your last topic first, you are indeed supposed to write your own lyrics as a rapper, but the music world is full of stories of stolen lyrics. And of course there could be a so-called "ghost writer" who gets paid not only to write the lyrics but also keep his mouth shut about the deal. As far as soccer goes, ask the librarian for a book on it, explaining the rules and strategies, maybe even its history (it started in Roman times). Which leaves your questions about love unanswered. Who can say? We'd like to hear more about what you think love is and is not.

I Know I Blew It!

I've taken a lot of things for granted in my eighteen years of living, but the one thing I wish I would have never let go of or never have taken for granted — is my freedom!

Because now that I am getting older I have finally realized how valuable it is for me to be out in the world! So now, here I am planning my future in a positive manner, because we all make mistakes — and all have a chance to redeem ourselves!

-Troy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Whatever has taken you to this understanding you now have of what you need to do with your life, is a blessing — even if you feel like you blew it! That's the craziest thing about redemption: When you've redeemed yourself, you can even be grateful for the pain that drove you there and the mistakes from which you learned. It begins with a decision to change, but redemption is your daily acts, large and small — and every step along the way to change is proof you've changed at all.

My Life

Today's topic is about my life. I was born March 1, 1989. I was born in Mexico, Michoacan, Nueva Italia. Well I know I have grandparents in Michoacan, but today I don't know them. My parents came to California when I was 2 years old.

While they were in California making feria (money) my older bro Jose and I stayed with our grandmama. Our moms, and my older brother told me that she really loved me and that she would stick up for me for whatever little bad thing I did. But I don't remember nothing about her. Even though I don't know her, I still love her. I've seen in pictures but not in real life.

After one year, my parents made enough money to bring us to California. My sister stood at my auntie's house while our parents went to pick up my brother and me. I arrived in California when I was turning three (years old). To tell you the truth, I really don't remember what Mexico looks like, or my family over there. But I'm still proud of being Mexicano de Michoacan.

-Curioso, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This piece is incredibly powerful, for so many reasons, and especially because it shows how you have a buried treasure, the memory of this woman who loved you so much when you were first in this world. Like you said, even if you can't remember her, the love is in there somewhere inside you to make you strong. Have you ever wondered what it would be like to go back to Michoacan? Do you think a part of that buried treasure would come up if you could see it? What would you say to your grandmother if you could meet her? What would she think of your life here? Do you ever wonder if things would have been different if you'd stayed?

Tired of Lies

i'm tired of being lied to
going through shhh i'm not supposed to
my life is full of jokes
and all i need to do is smoke
'cause my life is full of lies
not knowing when my time to die
my life is one big lie full of jokes
and i'm tryin to survive
lies, lies, lies — is all you hear
'cause people are afraid to be feared
'bout telling the truth
i'm tired of being lied to
'cause one day it might happen to you
and you might feel as tired as i do

-Young Chase, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You've hit a dark space, doing your time in this place. Maybe it's because nearly everyone thinks he's getting over at Camp, just pimping time till he gets back to his master plan, meanwhile his lies get more fully amped — 'cause he's lying to himself, too, and blowing this good chance. You're lying, too, when you claim all you need to do is smoke, 'cause it undermines your drive to do more than merely survive, and will have you thinking all your dreams are just a joke — when what you really need to do is set yourself some legitimate goals and go for broke! And forget all these fools at Camp with their lies which will soon have them locked up again inside, if they don't die — 'cause your mouth can get you killed, too, when you're talking like a fool.

I Took My Mom For Granted

I used to take my mom for granted. She'd tell me to do something, and me being me, I'd do the total opposite of what she meant.

I used to think she was doin' too much, but I've realized it was really me — doin' too much until I got locked up. And now I've realize what I was doin', and it was takin' my mom for granted. So, to all y'all out there disrespectin' yo' momma, let it go! 'Cause when she gone, it ain't nothin' you can do to get back all the times you did her wrong or hurt her.

-Lil' D, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Man, it's like you gave your mother an extra Mother's Day for Christmas, because you finally realized she was always only trying to give you a better life. You didn't understand doing what you were doing felt cool till you got locked up and realized that old school doing right is the road to a better life. And your mom won't always be there, so make her proud while she's still alive to see the hopes and dreams she's held for you to succeed — finally come to be, Lil' D.

A Taste of Lock Up

now that i had a taste of being locked up for real
i know how most of my homies feel
the words "eat, sleep and shhh", i finally understand
and i miss the outs, family and my number-one fans
i blew it this time and i really know
can't wait to go back to my home
i realized i need to really act right
getting out, get a job and go to school at night
this system is not for girls like me
i'm a righteous person and deserve to be free
i miss my loved ones and my comfy bed
and smoking cigarettes and blunts to my head
i'm telling you, for this jail i'm way too classy
and you know it too if you know sara aka sassy

-Sassy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: If by class, you mean "do right at last" — then it's all entirely up to you. But to tell you the truth, putting blunts to your head won't help you stay in school or get a job, let alone keep it. Maybe you know people who do all that and still manage to sneak it, but when you're trying to turn your life around, is no time for playing the clown or acting too slick either — 'cause either one will reduce your free days to just taking a breather from being locked up in a cold room with no heater.

Why Do I Do What I Do?

What it do, Beat? This ya man, Chill Will. I ain't wrote in a minute. I just been don' my thang by workin' out this time at the Ranch. This is my last Friday, so I'm out next Thursday. So it's only right I give back to the thugs and thugettes who keep up with The Beat, feel me? A word to the wise: Learn about yourself, so you can overcome obstacles in life by placing yourself where you need to be. That will help you stay out of incarceration, know what I'm talkin' 'bout? I have always wanted to learn about why I did shhh that would get me locked up. Being at LCR for seven and a half months helped me figure that out. True story.

Everybody makes mistakes. That's life. It's not important how you make the mistake, but what you do after making the mistake is what counts. Some get it right away; some get it later on, and some never get it. Which one are you?

I ain't worried about the suckas from the other side, who be hollering, tryna take me out on more than a few occasions, but it's nothin'—I'm still breathin', thanks to God. I got a lot of livin' to do before I die, and I ain't got time to waste. I wanna make it. That's my motto for 2007, off top. Live life to the fullest every day, because tomorrow is never promised.

To all incarcerated—do what you have to do to get out, then do you, because I'm a do me. That's all, Beat. I'll holla from the streets. Compliments to LCR for loosenin' my boots. I'm on in the race.

-Chill Will LCRS, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You sound like your program at the Ranch and your time there has really helped you, Will. Part of the lesson is learning that you don't have to answer to the other guys down there, but you do have to answer to yourself and always will. It's great that you're thinking for yourself. What can you do about anyone who is "trying to take you out?" That sounds very serious. If you live your life out of the streets, can you just avoid any enemies you may have had in the past and create a whole new life for yourself? We hope so.

The Violence Won't Stop

2007 will be different from 2006 because I feel

- 1) There will be more cops on the street
- 2) There would be more people dying
- 3) There will be more people in jail

That's what I think! But sometimes I think it's gonna be different. Every year the violence won't stop. I know that for sure.

I hope 2007 will be cool for me and safe. And I hope things will change in 2007 for me.

-Anthony, 150 Crew

From The Beat: One thing for sure is that the violence won't stop on its own. People will need to work together to make it stop – but how? What would it take to keep our children from dying? What can we do, as a community, as a group, to make the streets safer – because deep down, doesn't everyone want to see the streets safer? Shouldn't we be able to make that happen?

Fallin' Out of Love

How are you sweet? Fine I hope, just tryin' to forget about you and all the ways you've hurt me. When your mom put you out you came to stay with me. When your so-called best friends turned their backs on you I was there.

But look at how you repaid me, by cheating on me with other people.

I bet you thought I wouldn't find out but I did, and when I tried to ask you if you was talkin' to anybody else, even though it's already known the answer, you still lied. And for that reason I'm fallin' out of love with you.

-Lil' D, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's good that after this piece you went back to writing those love poems, so whatever this was about – a fight with your girl or you just practicing different writing styles... the darkness in it has passed (for now). Although your poetry is so good, you could write breakup poems too and we'd all be happy to read them.

The Best of Life

I can't think of anything on the subject to write about 'cause all I can think about is the food on the outs, and my family and my girl, wondering how she is and how my family are. Who is taking care of my mom? What she is thinking about me being locked up, and my girl, what she might be thinking about me, what she would do when I get out, what I'll do. All I wanna do is get out and move on with my life so I can get the best of life.

And to all the others locked up, stay up.

-Lil' Khan, 150 Crew

From The Beat: That last bit really had us going, because what we want to know is what is the Best of Life to you? That sounds like a piece we'd all want to read, and we know you've put a lot of thought into it.

I Am Cool, Calm And Collective

Well me, I can't stand when someone try's to tell you how you are living your day to day life, since you are from a different world. If you like me, I am from the ghetto. A person thinks that they can just look at you and say, or think, "Oh, he is gone be dead in a few years. Or he will end up in the pen." That's when I just lose it. I will tell you faster than a task car, with a nascar engine, that you don't know nothing about me, or anyone else from the ghetto. People just go with what they see, but they don't take the time to get to know people from the hood.

I'll tell you. I may be from Oakland and because you use to see me out there selling narcotics, that does not mean that I don't have a head on my shoulders. Or don't know right from wrong. Or just hella ghetto. And all I have on my mind is just killing, or stealing. Or if you say the wrong thing I bust you open, because that's not me. I am cool calm and collective.

-Tone Tone 150 Crew

From The Beat: A lot of times people do stereotype others and we can see why you'd be frustrated by that. It's up to you to prove that stereotype wrong and only you can do it for yourself. People will always judge others, even if they don't know them. Don't be too concerned with that and keep the focus on you, and what you need to do! Then those people will have to eat their own words and/or thoughts!

Connection

From day to day people are always telling me to change.

Some close to me and sometimes complete strangers.

To those complete strangers, "screw you!"

I hate it when some goody two shoes, comes from the cuts, and puts it in my face that I messed up real bad, and tells me I need to change.

That really pisses me off!

I don't need a rich bastard to tell me what to do, feel me?

They don't know where I come from and what choice's phase me day to day.

How do they expect us to change?

I having homies dying, getting stabbed, so I can't change.

Too deep in the game.

There's only one way in and one way out.

-Vietnamese, 150 Crew

From The Beat: In the 11.48+ issue of The Beat Within you received a Co-Piece Of The Week honor for your "My Mentality Has Changed" piece. This piece however is the complete opposite. We're not all "rich bastards, that don't know where you come from." We relate to you and your story because some of us have been in those same shoes! We know it's a daily struggle and some days are better than others. But we also believe and know that change is possible! We may not be close to you as those who know you. But we're close to you because we were once you. And we're just supporting what those who know you are suggesting.

Yup, I Blew It

i blew it when i robbed the guy i robbed
 i blew it when i let my family down by leaving the
 house that night
 i blew it when i was cutting school
 i blew it when i was in that room with that girl
 i blew it when i stopped believing in myself
 i blew it when i stopped playing sports
 i blew it when i thought my friends was cool
 i blew it when my mom told me she cared and i didn't
 listen
 i blew it when i stopped believing in god
 — yup, i blew it

-Lamont, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You've made your share of mistakes, that's for sure, but if you're ready to learn from them — you're more than halfway cured of 'hood disease. 'Cause the symptoms you list above will catch you up faster than the police! So live and learn, and don't return to incarceration, 'cause experience is giving you a good lacing. Mom was right, and God still watches over you every night.

It's OK to Cry

I'm in this cell
 Tryna get out this Hell
 I really don't know why
 But sometimes I cry
 This drives me insane
 Please Lord take away this pain
 As I look at the weather, man it gets no better.
 Taking these days one by one.
 Hopin' and prayin' that I'll be that one.
 To be home with my family
 Hopefully no one's mad at me.
 Mayn,' screw my daddy and the whole side of the
 family.
 It hella hurts to say that, but it ain't my problem.
 And I ain't gon' solve 'em, just because you a guy
 doesn't mean that you can't cry.
 And just because you cry doesn't mean you a sucka.

-Mike Jonez, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Man, we're glad you decided to start writing poetry. This one rocks, and it's just your first time out... we're hoping not the last. As for crying: Hell yeah it doesn't make you a sucka. Crying is a God-given way of relieving stress, as much a part of the human organism as sneezing or laughing... and with all the stress a person faces in jail, they'd have to be a sucka not to take advantage of the fact that we have that release.

The People I Be Around

In the new upcoming year I am going to change by not smoking weed. I'ma go to school every day like I been doing before. I don't have friends, I don't believe in friends, and that's why I'm not smoking.

I only hang out with family and my girlfriend and none of them smokes weed or do any drugs. And plus they don't hang out on the block so the temptation will never strike me. The people I be around are good influences, and they go to school every day.

When I get my chance back at freedom, I'm going to try not to go back to the block anymore and not hang out with the people I was hanging out with before. So when whoever reads this, I hope they do the same.

-Lil' Bra, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We can't blame you for losing some faith in friendship, if the people you were spending your time with before had nothing to offer you but trouble and the pain you ended up finding yourself with in here. And you are lucky to have family and a girlfriend who will support you once you're out, keep you on point and keep you away from hanging out with the wrong people. Keep an eye out, also, for friends who you can really count on, people who will bring out your strength and have your back — in a true way — when you need support.

She's Gone

It hurts bein' away from yo' mom
 I cry every night thinking' about my mom
 I took her for granted.
 I lie to my mom.
 And I think of Dawn, that's my mom
 And I say to her:
 Sorry for the pain I caused.
 Sorry for the struggle I caused
 But now when I need her the most --she's gone.

-Young F, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The regret and sadness hits like a wave; it nearly knocked us off our feet. We can only hope (and believe) that in her heart what she most wished for you was to be free, and strong, and happy, and good. It's not too late to honor that wish, you know that, right?

My Future Is Unknown.

In my life at this moment, I'm not sure what my future is
 goin' to be like.
 My case is very serious and my mind goes delirious.
 I know soon I will be sentenced but until then my future is
 unknown.
 I pray every day even I lay.
 I hope in the future I will not have to stay
 I hope in the future I can say to the youngsters that I lived a
 dangerous life that was not worth it...
 ... but I'm not sure I can do that because my future is still
 unknown.

-Lil' Rascal, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Right now your future feels unknown because of your case, but it's also unknown because you have so much control (really! Much more control than the judge does, even though it doesn't feel like that right now) over who you are going to be. Think about it, if you have a lesson to teach the youngsters you can do so, by speaking directly, by having kids of your own... or, if you are still locked up for a while, you can rely on communication with a pen and paper. You can decide what kind of a man you want to be: You, not the judge. You, not the counselors. You, not the DA. Just you. Your future is unknown, and it's on you to know it.

When I Gave Up On School

I remember when I first gave up on school. I was eleven years old and only in the sixth grade. I gave up on school because I felt that school wasn't for me. I didn't know any of my friends who had graduated from high school or went on to college.

All my life, I grew up hanging around ninjas who were either slangin' dope, killas, stealin' cars, totin' guns, robbin' people and hangin' on the block everyday, smokin' weed, drinkin' Hen, and gettin' money. Those type of people was my role models. I seen the older ninjas ridin' around in nice, luxury cars, livin' in big houses, and just flat out havin' thangs. That motivated me and other ninjas to get on our grind, so we could be like the older ninjas on the block.

All my role models was some kind of hustla, getting money. It ain't like I be grindin' and doin' what I do for fun! I grind and do what I do because that's all I really know. I mean, I know I can change, and sooner or later, I hope I do — but up until then, I'm gonna be thuggin' behind a project buildin', smokin' on that purple with the ghetto children.

-Torrin, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Most of this piece is right on the money, by which we mean, it's truth is powerful and undeniable. Then you get to that weak ending, where you start wishing and hoping about some vague future, but meanwhile you're going to keep smoking purple, keep grinding, keep getting caught up by the five-oh and keep doing time. Some are lucky enough to get a second chance at the Camp, some not so lucky. We understand you had no choice when you were a little youngster trying to make money to eat, but now your reason for not changing is hella weak. It's all you know? Okay, so it's time to grow! Learn something new. You say you can change. Now's the time to prove it, mayne! And stop leading the next generation of ghetto children to prison — 'cause even if you had no choice then, now it's your decision, young man.

Why They Call Me Hard-Headed

The reason why my family started calling me hardheaded is because they always used to tell me right from wrong. Also if I cut myself it will hurt but I always used to have to try it for myself and after I found out it actually hurt so I never cut myself again.

I don't know why but 'till this day I'm still that hardhead lil' kid as you can see, I'm in the hall for being heard headed.

-Lil' Tweety, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The example that gave you the nickname - the knife - is a great one. Isn't getting sent to the Hall kind of like being cut by a knife? It hurts you - so now do you think you can put that hard-headedness to work for you again, and make a stubborn vow that no matter what you'll never do anything to get yourself locked up again.

Just Between You and Me

I want our love to always be a person thing, just between you and me.

There will be others who will think they know us better than we know ourselves, who will want to offer their opinions on the way we ought to be. There will be times when we are curious or confused and we'll find use in talking to a friend or spending time alone but if ever there is a problem involving the two of us, I hope that we will always come to each other first.

For just as it took only the two of us to fall in love,
the two of us can overcome any disaster that gets in our
way.

-Gecorey, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's a good thing you decided to make this between everyone at The Beat, because even though it's a personal note to your girl, it's also got wisdom for all of us, one that we should all remember about love, about trust, and about how true feeling means always trying to understand the other person's point of view, and trying to communicate.

I Have Always Wanted to

i have always wanted to learn
about my culture
i have always wanted to learn
about why my mom and dad broke up
i have always wanted to learn
about why god put me here
i have always wanted to learn
about where my grandpa was born
i have always wanted to learn
about why my dad is never there
i have always wanted to learn
about why my brother did go in school
and i didn't

i have always wanted to learn
about women always run families
and not men
i have always wanted to learn
about why none of the men in my family
have ever gone to college
i have always wanted to learn
about why do us young people
do the things we do
i have always wanted to

-Lamont, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Those are some deep questions, and they all deserve answers, but sometimes what you need to do before you even start chasing answers, is change direction — 'cause the life you're living is like a cancer. The sooner you get it out of your life, the greater your chance to survive! Then, while you're recovering from 'hood disease, you can begin discovering answers to questions like these. Go back to school and get your degree, or right here work on your GED, then be the first man in your family to go to college and expand your knowledge — it's all but guaranteed that if you succeed to that point, you'll be well on your way to answering all these questions you posed in the joint.

Lost Without Money

I feel lost without money 'cause if I don't have it I feel empty inside. I gotta have money in my pocket else I'll have a bad day. Money is like my soul without it I will be nothing I'll have nothing to live for. Money is my everything. It's me and I'm it.

-Money hungry, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This piece is short and heartbreaking, and we hope everyone reads it. Because lots of people write about how they have money, or want money or get money, but you are one of the first writers honest enough to talk about where that deep urge for money comes from... it's terrible to read, but we think a lot of people feel like you. They say they "gots to eat" and yes, we know that there are people here who genuinely struggle to put food in their mouths and clothes on their back, or to take care of family... but still others need that money for chains, or brand names, or rims, or kicks, or just the feeling of a solid chunk of folded bills ... where do you think that feeling comes from? Read through The Beat, and look at all these pieces, about love, loss, grief, hope, knowledge... and then look inside yourself. You have all that too: Love, loss, grief, hope, knowledge, fears, dreams. That is your wealth, that is what will fill your emptiness. You could be rich like a king, but if you didn't see your true wealth, you'd still feel like a poor man.

Lust and Love

At first I didn't believe in love at first sight, but when I was younger and didn't know about love. Love is a thing that when it comes to you, and it feels good, but you have to be smart about it.

The person who always loves you the same that you love them. But the feeling you get when you love someone --you can't get to into it unless you know they love you the same way.

Lust is for ninjas that just want to hit somethin.' I never had love at first sight, but I did have love before. To me it felt good but sometimes I felt trapped inside it. Lust and love is two different things to remember that - whoever in love.

-Young Tav, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Man what happened with this great love of yours? Are you still together? How did you mee? What was it about her that felt different? Plus, you're so right about having to be smart about who you love. Then you say, that you have to make sure the other person loves you the same way. Did you do that? And how did you know? Sometimes people lie — how did you know that you could trust this person? This sounds like it could be a great story.

I Love to Get High

Yeah we like to smoke until we get exhausted,
Teenage lungs so we get to coughin'
But sometimes I might blow a blunt to the neck,
Smoke so much might end up on TV wit' a hole in my neck
Damn I need to calm down but ain't no passes for weed
So I roll blunts longer than a centipede
I ain't gon' lie, pass the blunt to Lamar
An' give the swisher to lil' Af 'cause that ninja got bars,
match up dubb dub
we go roll up the fattest
We off more grapes than a mixed fruit salad
Off all types of weed, purple or haze
got my eyes red like I been' cryin' for days.

-Capo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The most amazing thing about this flow is that every verse is fresh and original. You take one thing – the feeling of getting high, describe it in so many different ways: the centipede, the emphysema the fruit salad line... it's all smart and clever, and the way the rhymes flow are like a perfect puzzle. Why do you think we push you so hard to use these incredible talents of yours to expand your range as an artist? You've written about weed, ok, whatever. But there's a lot more insight you could bring to that topic too. Like, how old were you when you first started smoking? How many people started on weed and went to something else? Do you think more people smoke it in the hood because it helps them deal with stress? Do you ever wonder what your life would be like if you faced life with a clear head? Or how about writing about your future, your family, the view from your window, the world as you see it, your hopes for the future, your fears about the future, the city of Oakland as you see it.... imagine if you were a painter, and could only paint with one color... wouldn't you want more colors to work with?

When I Look In Your Eyes

When I look in your eyes,
 I see an African-American queen,
 Praying that every thing goes right
 When I look in your eyes,
 I see stress from sleepless night,
 Wondering if gon' get that call.
 When I look in your eyes
 I see a woman that means the world to me.
 When I look in your eyes
 I see my creator:
 My Mom

-Nitty, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We hope you make a copy of this touching poem for your mom. It's so powerful - not just because of the message of love to her, but also because of the way you build up to it, so we don't realize until the very end who is the person you're writing to. That's the combination that makes great art: A lot of craft and a lot of heart.

The Problems I Have

the problem i have is that i get angry too much
 just don't like when people try to touch
 i always try to keep family in touch
 because they are the ones that i love so much
 it's a problem to see them on a h v and have to come
 back
 man it just kills me to have to do that
 when i get out that's when all my problems will leave
 until then they will be right under my sleeve
 that's why i try to keep my mind on something positive
 instead of negative
 just awhile ago i felt like running but my brother from
 another, ally-bo
 told me to think of who's important and what's
 important to me fo' sure
 and it made me think about my daughter and what i'm
 putting her through
 by me being locked up in here 'stead of spending time
 with her just us two
 just the way she looks at me when i have to leave
 makes me know
 i hug her and give her a kiss goodbye and she don't
 want to let me go
 so i need to change my life, change my whole
 demeanor from head to toe

-Mos Def, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your daughter may feel distressed when you hug and kiss her goodbye, but every time you come back home, you see that light return to her eyes — and you both feel blessed. Good for Ally-Bo for reminding you of what you already know. Don't risk putting yourself in a place where she can only visit you behind a locked door! It's like one of those tests of manhood, separates the boys from the men for good, and the boys grow old locked behind bars while the men raise their children free beneath the sun, moon and stars. Patience, maturity, wisdom are essential qualities when it comes to beating the system. Now apply those same qualities to how you make your pay, and your daughter will delight when you come home from a hard day's work to be with her every night. Father knows best who blessed, if only he can master the child in his chest and pass manhood's test. You did it — now just don't quit it!

I See The Pain, Fear And Happiness In Your Eyes

When I look into your eyes I see the pain and misery that you have been through. I see the happiness you have, the love you have and the care for others. I also see the fear. I see all the things that bother you.

-Chris, Marin

From The Beat: Who are you writing this to, Chris? Regardless, either this person has a really expressive face and/or you're really sensitive to and care about his/her feelings. It sounds like even though this person appears to be very vulnerable, especially with you, that you honor and respect his/her openness and trust.

Preventing Something

One time I was at a party and my friends were really drunk and were about to fight, so I stepped between the two of them to stop them from fighting and one guy socked me in the face. I fell down and they continued to beat the shhh out of each other.

-Anti-Square, Marin

From The Beat: Well, at least you waded into that mess and tried to break the fighting up, Anti-Square, and that takes a lot of courage. Now that you've been hit in the face for your effort, what would you do if you ever encounter more friends who are slugging it out?

*What's Up Beat*

Well man, life is crazy, I'm gon' to have a baby. That's right, me!

I'm just 16 years old but I want a baby because I did a lot of bad things to people and what goes around comes around. I guess. But I just want to leave my seed here, the only memory I will have. Man it's crazy, I don't know what to do.

-Young F, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Easy there, young F. Slow your stroll! We're not going to tell you that you should or shouldn't have this baby, that's a decision you need to make along with your girl and your loved ones. But remember that there are lots of ways to make up for the wrong you've done in the past, you still have time to right your wrongs, you can turn that dark past into a bright future, and most importantly, you have a lifetime to leave your mark on this world. Leaving your seed - that's a perfect metaphor - but to take it one step further, now you have to ask yourself: Can I water it? Can I stay near it to help it grow? Can I protect it from weather and from anyone who would stamp it out? It's not just the seeding, but the raising you must decide on.

Crazy Thoughts: 2007

Well the way 2007 will be different from 2006 for me is I am going to be in CYA. I been hearing from some of the staff that is going to be hella different, and somewhat I already know it is.

I ain't scared or nothing but it seems like every night I'm sitting in my room thinking about it. I really don't know what to expect and that makes me have crazy thoughts. I just got to get ready to man up and get my mind right because I'm going to prison.

-Young Burna, 150 Crew

From The Beat: In a few months, there may well be some young man in this max unit in the same position you are in now. When you get to the Y, will you write to The Beat, so you can educate that young man on what to expect? Right now you are dealing with the unknown, and that's always terrifying - but soon you'll know what it takes to make the best of your time there, and when you've learned that, WRITE TO THE BEAT. Share your wisdom, share your knowledge, remember that you are a teacher, no matter what. Sure we can ask our colleagues who have spent many years in CYA to respond, but each of their experiences are different. The bottom line is CYA will be what you make of it!

Changes

the first person that want
 me to change is god
 the next in line that
 want me to change
 is my sister and myself
 i've taken my sister for granted
 i've realized that 'cause
 i used to dislike her act
 but she's the one
 that's there for me

-Washeda, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The only absolute requirement that you cannot do without if you want to change your life, is your own desire to change. It sounds like you've got it, and you've also got God and your sister watching your back.

The Righteous Way And Everything That Comes With It

I wanna go to church and praise the Lord.
 I wanna go to college and become an actress.
 I wanna finish my program a CAGC so I can be a role model
 for my family.
 I wanna be able to walk down the street and not stop and
 talk to every boy I meet.
 I wanna be able to hear, "I'm proud of you Genevieve for what
 you accomplished," from the ones I love.
 I wanna go to Italy and marry the man of my dream, but I'm
 just one Native American stating her dream.

-Genevieve Unit 5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You have set some wonderful goals for yourself. What's your plan for achieving them? And what is it about Italy that makes you think that's where you'll find the man of your dreams? We wish you good luck in making all of your dreams a reality.

Realizing My Thoughts

I've realized that the mistakes I've made were my choice.
 I've made up my mind. Instead of using my hands for everything I'm gonna use
 my voice.
 Realizing my thoughts.
 Every time I walk, its like I'm falling so deep into a hole; it's like not using my
 mind and going out of control.
 It's like I'm talking but not receiving a response; would I look good with my hair
 dyed blonde?
 Realizing my thoughts.
 Are you listening or are you just staring?
 'Cause it seems to me in my heart that you're just not caring, people always
 saying that talking is hella cheap, I take it as knowledge; but that's just me.
 I've been making myself so miserable its like stepping in dog poop.
 Realizing my thoughts.
 I only traveled from Oakland to San Francisco but it felt so far away that I thought
 I was visiting Ohio.
 It's like someone gave you something which they call hand-me-down, next thing
 you know the word is all over town, like a factor/ actor it's a one time pleasure I
 have reasons and made choices and I treat them like treasure.
 Realizing my thoughts.

-Na-nah, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Beautifully written and truthful. Thanks for the great piece. We hope you keep writing and realizing your thoughts ON PAPER!

I only traveled
 from Oakland to
 San Francisco but
 it felt so far away
 that I thought I was
 visiting Ohio

How Will 2007 Be Different?

I don't know how 2007 will be different for
 me, but I know what changes I want for
 myself next year. My New Year's resolution
 is to be better person for myself, family
 and my community.

I don't want to continue doing things
 that will lead me to spending the rest of
 my life in prison. I want to cut down on
 drugs and alcohol when I get out next
 year or hopefully stay drug free.

I plan on going to City College next
 year fall semester. I'm a try to stop hanging
 out on the streets, 'cause I noticed that
 I'm just throwing away my life, doin'
 that stupid shhh. I hope my plans follow
 through, an' hope that 2007 will be better
 than this year.

-Chi Frank LCRS, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Sometimes it seems like two parts of your personality are doing battle within you—the bad boy who likes to party in the streets, and the serious guy who hopes to go to college, use his talents and explore all the possibilities the wide world has to offer. You've already tested the first—why don't you step up your game on the part of you that is quiet, smart, and ready to explore all his skills and potential? Don't "try," do it!

I Be a Learner

life passing by
 in the blink of an eye
 locked in a cage
 heart full of rage
 on a rampage
 to succeed
 and fulfill every desire
 and need
 until i'm free
 then it means
 nothing to me
 locked away
 i have a chance
 to be me
 but when i'm free
 something evil
 takes over me
 from intoxication
 to a corrupted nation
 from a mind so bold
 to a heart so cold
 who i be
 tends to be
 a changing mystery

-Jacob, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We hope you mean that you're ready to see through the mystery of why you slip and slide into a life that brings you back to intoxication and then incarceration, first crime and then doing your time. If you're really a learner, even if you haven't learned, it's not an endless mystery unless you continue to spurn the lessons you learn when you're clean and sober in the Hall. Maybe what you need to see is how to be sober and clean in the outs so you can rise above a corrupt society and stay happy, healthy, alive and free.

My Girl

I love my girl
 Like a chocolate swirl
 I can taste her rainbow
 She taste like mangoes
 She taste so sweet
 From head to feet
 Every time I taste her I feel
 complete.

-Mango lover, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Wow, next time we do hope you put your name on this. Poetry this good deserves a byline!

Describir Una Situación Y Salir De Ella

En mi situación, perder una pierna sería algo difícil de superar. Creo que trataría de ser menos tímido en el sentido de pensar que no tuviera una pierna. Trataría de no acomplejarme tanto. No es que me alegraría, pero que más da. Trataría de acomplejarme en las cosas que no puedo hacer o solamente adaptarme a mi vida sin una pierna.

Creo que sería casi igual que una persona tenga dinero y después no tenga.

La definición de la libertad. Tener la libertad es lindo porque me doy cuenta lo triste que es llegar a terminar en la cárcel por primera vez. Sabes, aquí no puedes hacer lo que quieres. La libertad es lo más maravilloso que Dios nos dió. El nos dió vida para disfrutar el mundo y no estar encerrado.

From The Beat: ¿Que te inspiró a escribir sobre el sobrevivir al faltar una pierna? ¿Por qué se te vino eso en mente? ¿Vistes a alguien perder su pierna a través de una experiencia? Sobre tu Segundo tema, creemos que la libertad es lo más apreciado que uno pueda tener. Esperamos que hagas lo posible para obtener lo tuyo. Es hora que aprecies lo que Dios te ha dado. Suerte!

Describe A Situation And Getting Out Of It

In my situation, to lose a leg would be something difficult to overcome. I believe I would try to be less timid in regards to thinking about not having a leg. I would try not to focus on it so much. I'm not saying I would be happy, but what else does this situation bring? I would try not to dwell on the things that I cannot do or simply adapt to my life without a leg.

I believe that it would almost be the same situation like when someone who has a lot of money and then later on, they don't have any.

The definition of freedom: Being free is wonderful because I am realizing how sad it is to end up in jail for the first time. You know what? In here, you cannot do what you want. Freedom is the most marvelous thing that God gave us. He gave us life to enjoy this world and not to be locked up.

-Marvin Unit 6, SF/YGC

From The Beat: What inspired you to write about overcoming the loss of a leg? Why did this come to your mind? Did you see someone lose their leg because of an experience? Regarding your second topic, we believe that freedom is the thing that one appreciates the most. We hope that you do whatever is possible to obtain yours. It is time for you to appreciate what God has given you. Good luck!

My Addiction to Drugs Made My Decisions

There are a number of things that I have taken for granted over the past years. First of all, I took my freedom for granted. I had it once, and thought it was all good to do whatever I wanted and break the law — and then I lost my freedom with a quickness!

I took my family for granted. I had a good relationship and lived with my grandmother. I left home and only came back when I needed clothes or to eat. My family saw it as me not wanting to be there, but it wasn't me that was making those bad decisions — it was my addiction to drugs. Now I'm locked up, and I miss my family the most!

-Jalisa, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You have an understanding beyond your years, for there are plenty of addicts much older than you who never figure this out. You hear it all around you in here, too: "I just go to do me!" by which an addict means: get high by any means necessary regardless of the consequences for themselves, loved ones or anyone else. Now that you know better, the question is whether your heart will join forces with your head, so you'll do right day by day, everyday — or go back to using drugs instead.

Lo Único Que Les Puedo Decir....

Es que hay que confiar en Dios porque El es el único que nos puede ayudar a salir de esta situación. Gracias a Dios yo no he perdido ninguna habilidad, como dice el papel, como de caminar. Lo único que he perdido es a mi padre.

Mi definición sobre la libertad. Primero que nada, la libertad es lo mejor del mundo que uno pueda andar donde uno quiera. Por eso, tenemos que tratar de no volver aquí porque cuando estemos viejos, vamos a preguntarnos que hacíamos a los 16 años y nos acordaremos que estábamos encerrado y no podimos disfrutar nuestra juventud.

From The Beat: Sentimos mucho la pérdida de tu padre. Esperamos que no dejes que esa experiencia afecte el resto de tu vida. Eso es verdad, no hay nada doloroso como perder el momento más lindo del mundo que es nuestra juventud. La juventud es la parte más bella del mundo, no la desperdices en cosas que no valen la pena. Esperamos que esta situación te haya abierto los ojos y veas con claridad lo que te conviene en tu vida.

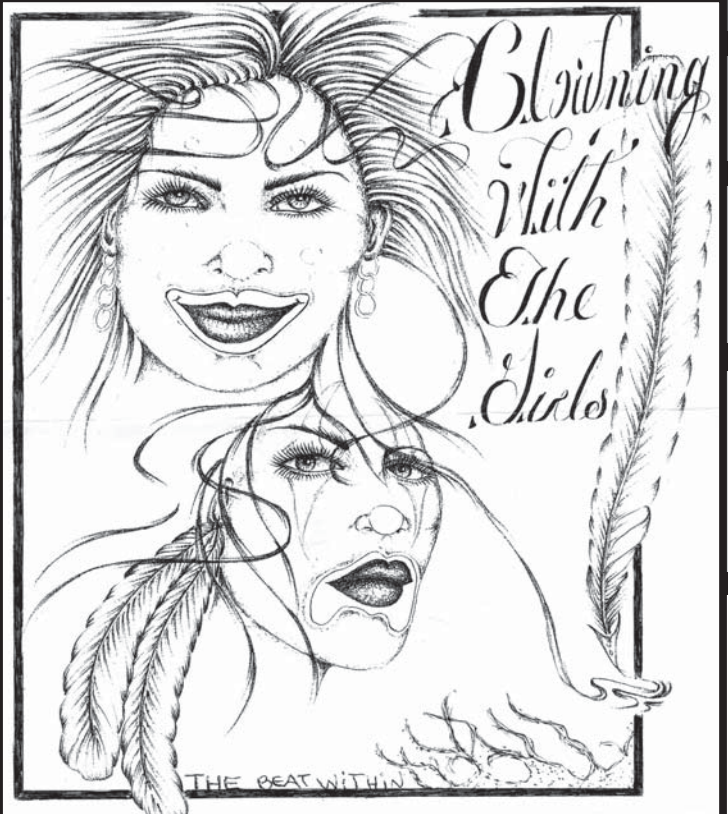
The Only Thing That I Can Tell Y'all...

Is, you have to believe in God because He is the only one who can help us get out of this situation. Thanks to God, I have not lost any abilities like for example, what the topic sheet says, how to walk. The only thing that I have lost is my father.

My definition for freedom: First, and above all else, being free is the best thing in the world because one can go wherever one wants to. That's why, we have to try to not come back to this place because when we're old, we're going to ask ourselves what we were doing at the age of 16 and we'll remember that we were locked up and we were not able to enjoy our youth.

-Dimas Unit 4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We deeply regret to hear about the loss of your parents. We hope that you do not allow that experience affect the rest of your life. That's true: There's nothing painful like losing the most wonderful moment in the world, which is our youth. Our adolescence is the most beautiful part of the world. Don't let it go to waste on things that are worth nothing. We hope that this situation has opened your eyes and you see clearly what benefits your life and what doesn't.



I am...

Adventurous
African American
Beautiful
Smart
Courageous
Humble
Dependable
Fast Thinker
Gorgeous
Fast Learner
Happy
An Individual
Intelligent
Purposely Black
Loving

Made human... so don't judge

me by my color. Judge me by my behavior

I am
Civilization
Amusing
Optimistic
Petite
Restless
Stable
Tidy
Funny
Goofy
Outgoing

-Nesbitt, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Well said, well read. We like strong young women who know their value and aren't afraid to say it. What will you do with all the wonderful character traits that you possess? Time to make a plan!

How 2007 will be different from 2006

2007 will be different from 2006 because I'm gonna make it different. I'm gonna stop poppin' and drinkin' and start going to school. At least I'm gonna try.

My moms told me that I got to if I wanna go back home, and I ain't tryna stay here.

This my first time in here and my last.

I'm tired of this place.

-Kat, 150 Crew

From The Beat: That is sort of the point of juvie, that you're not supposed to like it and that you're supposed to want to get out and stay out. If you don't, you just keep coming back for longer and longer and then you get sent to a group home. So do what you say you're going to do, and stay out!



Freedom

Keep yo' head up
Like 2Pac said

Don't let life get you down
'Cause you got rapped by the feds
All of us are going to be free
Just you wait and see
No more pain, or unfair misery
No more subliminal bigotry
Or lies from the government
Open up the gates of freedom
'Cause we're comin' in
No more sin

Related elevated freedom from gin

Smile sublime
Thoughts combined
Time unwinds
People realize
Realization
Of a whole divine nation
Underground parties
Of ex-con revelations

People be spacin'
Hearts trumpin' and racin'
It's all foretold
In those cold pages
I'm anticipating freedom
From my age—16 years

No fears
Just run away
Miss thorough rough situations
Lay low
Come up and get out
Of this "so-called nation"
That the end of my time
Revelation

-J, Marin

From The Beat: Your poem sounds very apocalyptic. In what "cold pages" is everything revealed? What do you think the future holds? What do you hope it will hold for you? You have some good ideas in this poem that would make interesting essays for The Beat in the future, such as "Subliminal Bigotry," "Government Lies" or "Ex-Con Revelations." So if any of these topics from your poem appeal to you to write extended essays or poems about, please do...

I'm Sick At Heart

The room is spinning
And I can't breathe
An', oh, my head is just aching
Hands won't stop sweating
My knees, girl, they just won't stop shaking
My stomach is turning flips
And I feel sick
You see
And this is all just at the thought
Of you leaving me

-Alone LCRS, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Yo uwrite from the heart. We're sorry you're going through that hideous withdrawal that hurts so much when someone you love wants to leave your life.

That's It

that's it, that's all
no more j-hall
that's it, that's all
i'm done being tae-dog
that's it, that all
put my pistol down
that's it, that's all
before i fall
that's it, that's all

-Tae-Tae, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Man, we'd like to put this on a billboard, or one of those little signboards inside the AC Transit bus, 'cause in a very few words you say so very much. Major props on quitting before you got dropped! And thanks for your finely writ words of wisdom: "That's It".

I Want You To Know

(Hook)

I just want you to know
How much I want ya
How much I need ya
I just want you to know
I'm here to love ya
I'm here to please ya

I saw you posted by yourself
It look like you needed someone
Someone you can talk to
Someone who really wants you, girl
Let's see what's up

I ain't tryna run no game
I just wanna know your name

-Eli, Marin

From The Beat: Lovely song! Each week you compose a new song and sing it to your unit in our workshops. They're always about how you see a tender lady and hope to be everything she needs and desires. Do your songs reflect your own yearnings? We hope whomever inspires your music someday hears your love songs and responds.

Keep yo' head up

Like 2Pac said

Don't let life get you down

Almost Completed My Program

I feel so bad! I almost completed my program and my commitment to my last group home, but I blew it!

I could be at home, but I blew it this time — because I refused that offer. And look where I'm at now! I blew it big time, and now I have to suffer 'till I'm eighteen, which is not until 2008. And I want to change so I can be there for my daughter and my nephews and nieces, but I need help to do that!

I need to stop blowing it for myself. I need to think before I do, from now on, and everything will be better for me.

-Meli(lena), 150 Crew

From The Beat: The help you need most, must come from you, yourself. Yes, it would be good to think before you do, but since no one can always do that — you need to build up good habits, too. You know, not always just scheming to get over by looking like you're doing right, but actually making a habit of it so that it's your first thought, what you do without thinking. This can only happen if you do it when no one's watching you but you, 'cause the more slick you get at putting one over on someone else, the more slick you get at putting one over on you — and you find yourself suddenly blowing it again, just like you used to.

Tired of Coming Here

i am tired of coming back
to juvenile hall
so when i get out
i am going to be a different person
i am going to go back to school
and finish tenth grade
and get a job
and get a bank account

-Jillian

From The Beat: For sure that means you'll be acting differently, but you'll still be you — the real you, not someone who was too insecure and immature to do what she always knew was best for you and what you really wanted to do, too, but never followed through. Now do your do!

The Hall Made Me an Angry Man

I'm going to say that the Hall just made me an angrier man. The only thing it helped me do is think a little better than what I was doing on the outs. You feel me? But it is still a bad thing for me to be getting all this time!

Them walls make me even angrier than I was the first time had I was locked up here when it made a kid have that I-don't-give-a-damn what it do! You feel what I'm saying? I need my freedom. And I know that it is my responsibility to keep it, so I go bad when someone takes it from me.

They got a ninja behind this door with only four walls (and no doorknob, so it's all walls — you feel?) and nothing that a kid can look at. Put yourself in my shoes. You'd a feel the same as me if you lived even a day in my life (without killing yourself). I'll think about this a lil' more next week, 'cause I'm just getting started on this topic. So just keep it real with yo'self.

-Choyce, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We can feel that this topic has touched something deep inside you, some combination of anger and despair that you want to make clear is the natural response to how your life is being handled by a system that is supposed to be about juvenile rehabilitation — unless that went out the window with this wrong-headed notion of charging juveniles as adults (as if there were such things as "adult crimes" and "juvenile crimes" — and if there are, then why aren't adults being charged as juveniles, which is to say, sentenced to rehabilitation as opposed to punishment for "juvenile crimes"). We're not saying you're free of all responsibility for finding yourself where you are, but we hear you loud and clear when you argue that the Hall did not help that kid who was first arrested, either want to, or learn and know how to, stay free. But now you're almost a man, and it's all on you to understand that you need to change what you do for your own self.

I Want to Learn How to Obey and Not Disappoint

I have always wanted to learn about the law, I mean, learn how I can stay out of trouble and listen to the laws and obey them

Probably everything would change if I could learn that, and I could finally be at rest and live my life without getting ito trouble and disappointing my grandma more than she is disappointed in me right now. I want her to be happy — and to forgive me for everything I did in my life. I want to change but don't know how.

-Meli(lena), 150 Crew

From The Beat: Some people can learn simply to obey the laws, out of fear or a rationally understanding of the eventual consequence of breaking the law, which is to say, you eventually get caught for something, and punished, and if you still don't change, caught for something worse and punished longer. For others, maybe like you, that doesn't seem to work for them. They need to learn how to want to do what's right, learn how to write the "law" in their hearts (this is what Jesus taught, calling it the Law of Love, or generosity or compassion, which is to say not always scheming to get over on someone but wanting to do what's best) and make it a habit, something they do whether anyone else knows of it, sees it, rewards it, or not. You have to begin doing for you, not for the judge or police, not even to get your grandma to forgive you — though if you live like this, she surely will — but maybe to make it up to yourself for all the times you've disappointed you (or disappointed God), by practicing doing what's right (and generous and compassionate and loving) whether anyone but you ever knows of it or not. In the end, everyone will see it in you, because your habits always show through, but in this case, shine through! Practice it everyday in the smallest things, and large ones, too. And when you slip, it's coo' — just forgive yourself, make amends if you can, and get back to the new you. For your sake and your grandma's, too!

My Mother Wants It

the person that want to see
me change, is my mother
that took care of me
since i was two-and-a-half
and she tells me all the time
"you made the bed, so
now you have to lay in it"
and she always have the right
thing to tell me and she is
the only family that i have

-Jillian, 150 Crew

From The Beat: For your mother's sake and your own, it's time to change — you're almost grown! And being grown up doesn't mean cutting school and getting high, but means accepting responsibility and always finding the strength to continue to try, like your mother has done for you since the age of two.

If I Was ...

If I was a fifth, we all a' be drunk! But anyways, if I was whatever I want, I would be God because I know that I want to live my life right. Yeah, and I'd like to be going all over the world to see new things, too.

And for those around me who really do not know me, if you want to be my friend, you will just have to believe in me — otherwise I'm not going to say nothin' to you. I'm just going to mess with them real peoples and let them fake peoples just die and go to hell if that's the road they choose to take.

It's a lot that I would do if I was God that I can't even put on this sheet because I don't know how to say it. But I do love my God, and if you love yours, it's going to be all good in life! What it do.

-Choyce, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You know when you love someone and they want to do something, if you love them enough, you do your best to do it. Right? So if you love God, you have to do your best to do what you believe deep in your heart God wants you to — and since your God is a God of love, mercy and forgiveness, that's how you need to live your life. We know it's not easy when you're surrounded by what you call "fake peoples" — but that's why Jesus said you should be "as cunning as a snake and innocent as a dove" (you feel?). It means: don't set yourself up to be harmed by a snake out of some misunderstanding of what mercy, love and forgiveness means, but also do no harm yourself and hold no grudge. What gets best in life then is inside yourself, how you feel, no matter what happens outside of you (what others choose to do).

My Unhappy New Year

The thing that is going to make 2007 different from 2006 are that I'm not going to be with my loved ones for awhile.

I basically start '07 at somebody's house with kids I don't know and probably don't need to know. I'm about to hate the new year, because normally I would be with my family, but now I know I'm gonna be with other people I don't know.

This shhh hellu sucks. You know what I'm 'bout done. I'd rather lead this new time one minute at a time.

-Lil' Tweety

From The Beat: We wish you the best at the group home, and hope it works out for you. We know it doesn't feel like a good way to start the year, but take it one minute at a time, like you said, but don't forget to plan for your future, and write to The Beat to let everyone who reads it know how you're doing.

I Have Fallen in Love at First Sight

There was this girl and she was a beautiful girl and she had a nice body. I went out with her and we are still going out, and that's all I care about.

It had happened at a party at my uncle's house. It did last. It felt good and I feel good. I also know cousins that fell in love at first sight. All the ninjas that can't find love: you straight up sucka ass players... all you do is hit it and quit it.

-Lil' Khan

From The Beat: Was it just her looks and body that made you love her? What about her personality? Is she faithful? Funny? Smart? Kind? The beauty may be what first caught your attention, but what is it that kept that attention?

I'm Still Learning

Hopefully I'll be out by 2007 summer and from the experience I do better than what I was doing. I will have gained lots of knowledge and a little of wisdom.

I'll change a lot because I have learned a lot. And I'm still learning.

-Marco

From The Beat: What have you learned? Thinking about that got us so curious we might even have to make that a topic for discussion at the beginning of a unit. In your case, for example, what are some of the things you feel you've learned? What are the greatest lessons so far.

All Bad

How's '07 different from '06?

There will be a lot more killings.

Some people will move from Oakland.

The police will go bad on all the black people, causing the black people to go off and start shooting them up.

The rent in stuff will be high, and gas too.

They will upgrade cars and computers even more.

-RJ

From The Beat: This is a pretty bleak vision of the future, like something out of science fiction too. It actually felt like we were seeing the beginning of a movie about the future, too, with more fighting and more guns... and more of a gap between rich people who can afford rent and gas, and more people who can't. Have you ever thought of making movies or writing science fiction? You've obviously got the vision for it!

Gene System

I have always wanted to learn about how the gene system and how DNA works out. What's the different chances of the color hair and eyes could be before your baby and what not.

-John

From The Beat: We just read that Biotech (the field you're talking about) is likely to be the biggest job market in the country over the next ten to twenty years... which means that you picked a smart interest. If you keep studying it and satisfying that curiosity, you could also end up being rich rich. And when you do become rich, don't forget about us. Maybe you could sponsor a full-color issue of The Beat!

Birthday

I hate the hall because this shhh is hellu bad, and I can't do what I wanna do. I can't wait 'till I get out of the system. Hopefully I got one year or less left. My birthday is in several days, that's hellu messed up. I'm gonna be here for my birthday.

-Lil' Dame

From The Beat: By now your birthday is past, and we hope it wasn't as hard as you feared. But now you have another birthday coming up in - less than 11 months - where do you hope to spend it, where do you hope to be at in your life when it comes back around?

It Ain't Right

It ain't right because I'm in the hall and can't get no girls or no money, shhh ain't right cause girls ain't trying to write a ninja or nothing.

But it's OK, 'cause girls ain't nothin'.

It ain't right cause the white people stay on my back and I've been tryin' to get the off, but they hangin' on my shhh.

-Lil' Rb

From The Beat: You're right - there's nothing good about lockdown. You lose your freedom to work, and you lose the girls. So use the anger you're feeling now and decide that no matter what, you'll never come back. Don't blame the police, the system or anyone else. If you do your time and get your money legit, you CAN make it right, and you'll never be stuck in here writing something like this again!

Off to ROP

Q-Vo Beat, this is Curious, from Hayward California. Still up this motha, doing time. I go to court November 29, 2006. Hopefully I go to ROP next month so that I can start my time, you feel me!

Today's topic is about love at first sight. Of course I believe in love at first sight because I fell in love at first sight with my firme Jainita, (Jessica). The very first time I saw her was a t church and that's when I fell in love. The first moment I saw that girl. I love Jessica

- Curious

From The Beat: This is a good note to read. You have heart, you have hope, you have love, you have a second chance. Last week you read some harsh words about disaffiliation outloud, and we do have to ask - will you be able to do something with that second chance if you're still caught up in gang fights?

Roses And Violets

Roses are Red,
violets are blue

I'm from the hood
and so are you

girls love me 'cause they know I'm the shhh
ninjas hate

'cause they know I get it main
I can't wait 'till I get out,

so I can see my peeps

I'm from the streets

rest in peace Paco and Chris

I miss my mom 'cause I know she love me
but she knows I'm gonna eat dry salami and
macaroni

the girls miss me 'cause they know I'm the one
roses smell good, they give me the blues
violets are sweet I'm a straight beast,

-Lil' Suave

From The Beat: We remember that for this poem, you stepped up to the challenge of writing without some of the words you like to count on... and we see as usual you kept your wits around you. And now, soon, you'll be back home, where it will be even more important to keep your wits about you. Good luck with everything, Suave. We're hoping you keep in touch with The Beat, and live up to the best inside you.

Love In The Future

I don't believe in love at first sight, but if I get to know her in some point in our relationship, it could be in love cause -- now I got a piece on my hand. She says she loves me, I know she do, and I love her too.

In some point in our relationship she will have a young Vince, you know have my baby. But love at first sight, no. But love in the future, yes.

-Young F

From The Beat: Work your way there, and let us know if this love blossoms.

I Just Ain't Fallin'

I don't believe in love at first sight. I only believe in lust at first sight. Why cause that's how I be feelin' at the moment. I just ain't fallin' love at first sight.

-Marco

From The Beat: Trying to figure out the difference between lust and love is one of the most confusing parts of trying to be an adult... one sets your skin on fire, the other warms your heart. Have you ever fallen in love? And how was that different from first-sight flashes?

Two People to Lean On

What's up it's yo' boy once again. Who? Mike Jonez. Yeah well anyways. I'm right here hellu bored. 'bout to talk about my topic. Someone I lean on: the most people I lean on is my mamaz and my mom. Like I once said before they're doing their best to get me a lawyer. Every time I get in trouble I always lean on my mom, and whenever I don't feel good I call my Lil' Mamaz and we talk and she make me feel better.

Well there's a lot more to say but I'm a go for now. So late!!!

-Mike Jonez

From The Beat: Just from the brief sketches of her, your mom sounds like a woman of real strength. How many boys did she raise on her own -four? What qualities do you think you have that are similar to her? And what qualities are different?

Three Answers and ...

I don't know what will happen in 2007, but I do know I'm going to change my wardrobe. I'm not going to be the same person I use to be.

I'm going to get a job and go to school.

I'm going to try my hardest not to come back to jail. No I don't believe in love at first sight, because you don't know her needs. I refuse this from now on

-Slickback

From The Beat: Thanks for answering all the questions, especially if you felt like you weren't into writing... of course you can decide not to write (we'll be sorry, but we would never try to force you), though we will say that it's too bad, because you showed a lot of insight in just these questions. Honesty about your future, and doubts, and maturity about love at first sight - your voice is one we'd be proud to add to the chorus of The Beat, and you are always welcome in our pages.

The Good Life

Look at me now I'm in a small jail cell, been thinkin' when I get out I'm gonna do my damn best to do good, because I have a good life. I'm too young to throw it away. I wanna have kids, get married. I wanna live the good life. All the beautiful girls never thought but school, friends, family everything the stars and moon. I wish the best for every one out there.

-Lil' James

From The Beat: What's your plan for doing good? It's one thing to think about it and another to do it. Be sure you have a plan.

Lil Byron

I'm a black man in the hall and this shhh ain't coo'.

Every day go buy is a livin' hell for me and when I'm in my room, it makes me even madder because I be stressin' a lot more than when I'm in my room.

But everybody needs something to believe in. That's why I believe in myself, and when I get out of the hall I'm going to a group home and I don't want to go to a damn weak-ass group home. But if I don't go to the damn weak-ass group home, they gonna send me to the Y for three years and that's what I don't want to do.

-Lil' Byron

From The Beat: Looks like you've got the group home beat - because if you truly believe in yourself like you say in this piece, then that's what will carry you through. Everytime you want to fight, refuse, wild out or run, just remember that you said this: You believe in yourself. We believe in you too. Good luck.

I Go Stupid

I hate comin' to jail because it's not for me. I will love to be in the streets. I miss all the people that I used to be wit' I know everybody miss me because I go stupid.

All you ninjas that's reading this, I know yo' girl know me.

-John

From The Beat: It's good you hate the Hall. It's good you hate coming to jail. For your next piece, would you write what you love about freedom? And also, what will your life look like if you cut out every part of it that isn't legit? What will you replace it with?

Released To Camp

What's up, Beat! This is Lil' Ant from Hayward. First off, I want to pay my respect to my fallin' soldier, Arturo Romero. Rest in paradise, homeboy. You know we miss you. Now to the business at hand.

I want to let all up at Camp know that I'm on my way up there. I'm gonna just do my program so I can hit the block once again. To all doin' time, keep yo' heads up! And to everyone at Camp, do y'all programs, too, and keep yo' heads up! And to all fallen soldiers, RIP. This is Lil' Ant and I'm out.

-Lil' Ant

From The Beat: We put in your RIP Arturo Romero this week, but in the future if you want to pay respects to your deceased homie, you'll need to write a piece about him or her and you. We don't print RIPs or shout-outs any longer in The Beat, as a rule. Now to business: doing your program just to go back to doing what brought you here is a waste of time. You are probably planning to be slick, but you need to come up with a better plan quick - or you'll waste your chance of being free without a warrant on your back. Take advantage of that by getting your life right while you can, Lil' Ant.

Bounced

First I want to send my utmost love and respect to those worthy. This Lil' Mousie from Livermore I just want to say what's up to all putting it down that are locked up behind these east bay walls! I'm back because I bounced out from this group home in Stockton. But I ain't goin' out I'm just maintainin' solid in the hall much love and respect!

-Lil' Mousie

From The Beat: Is the hall better than the group home? Tell us why you bounced, why you ran. You are not the first or last to do it, so break it down for us.

Stop My Shine

I ain't never been a sucka, and my squad made sure of that.

Been to jail several times, and I ain't goin' back. All these hatin' ass ninjas trying to stop my shine. 'Cause I'm a young ninja that's trying to get mine. RIP Jerm and Lil Weezy

-Quan

From The Beat: We had to cut the violence out of this piece, and we hope you understand why: You say this is your last time in jail, and we want that to be true, but if you're still talkin' guns and turf and getting your shine, then how do you expect to stay out?

I Blew It This Time

I really blew it this time 'cause I can't be with my girl, and I really miss her. This other girl I used to talk to she had a baby on the way. She was eleven weeks (pregnant) but she killed it. I'm happy, not like that 'cause it was my baby, but she is not the right one to be having a baby by, u feel yo' boy, but if it was by the girl I talk to right now I would have to keep it cause she is the right one.

But I feel bad for her for killin' my baby. I never told her to. She did it on her own. But I can't wait until I get out 'cause my girl is waiting on me. I get a letter from her every week, I was just talking to her earlier on the phone and she was so happy to hear from her boy, so I'm going to holla at y'all next week.

-Lil' Rome

From The Beat: We think you have it in you to be a great father one day, but when you talk about who is "the right one," we have to ask, are YOU the right one? Do you have a job? Are you ready to stay in every night to help with the baby? Ready to work hard at school so that in a few years your earning potential will be up? Ready to spend your money on diapers instead of fun? Are you adult enough yet to be "the right one" to father a child? We think you will be one day, but not until you shake the system and the life that brought you to it.

Waitin' for a Blessin'

My heart and my mind be troubled. I'm hella mad at the situation I'm in and because I got snitched on by these fakes about some shootings. Now I'm trying to figure out a way out. Now I'm coming to God beggin' for forgiveness an' for a blessin' to make me a way out. Now I'm prayin' and waitin' for a blessin' and believin' I'm getting my way out.

-Marcus

From The Beat: Are you breathing? Do you have loved ones? Do you have legs? Do they work? Can your eyes see? Are you eating enough? Do you have water when you're thirsty? You do don't you... aren't you already blessed? You're stressed right now, but if you don't focus on what's good, you'll go crazy. So tell us: What's good?

Back to Camp

I'm on my way to Camp. I lost my freedom, and I got to do six-to-nine months just to get it back. Man, this ain't even cool!

I got charged with ten robberies, but I only did two of them. But, you feel me, I'm Ant, which equals Ain't No Talking. I'm gonna take my case like a man. I spit on sixes and I shine on nines! Sip be on elevens. I did the crime, so I sure can handle the jail time! Straight up, man, I'm gon' get money, no matter what! - But not that way! And when I get out, I'm gon' land somethin' fast.

-Ant

From The Beat: Landing a job fast, is a good idea, but if it doesn't come fast, don't give up on finding a legal job, however humble, on your way to finding a legal career [a job that pays well for life, all right!]. It's easier to get a job when you have a job. Then when you get that first job, or even second or third, keep on looking to move on up! The longer you've been making legal pay, the better you look to your next employer, okay? And add skills as you go - that's how you work toward a career. Ya know?

This Last Case

Waitin' for this last case to see where I go hopefully home and I ain't comin' back no more since it's my first time. I hope they give me some slack, Judge K always on a ninjas back.

-Kid Ka

From The Beat: We hope you get that slack too, but even more we hope that if you get that second chance you take it for real. What's your plan to stay out of Judge K's crossfire from now on?

I Lost Everything

When I got myself locked up, I lost everything. But there are some things that I cared most about, such as my mom, my sisters, my girlfriend and my freedom.

I was not exactly thinking straight and now my life is changed dramatically.

I just can't write no more. It's just not my week, and I don't know why, it's just how I feel about my situation.

-Young Burna

From The Beat: There's never been a writer who didn't feel what you're going through right now, and like the true writer you are, you tried to get through it anyway... and put your [painful] thoughts on paper. You may have lost a lot, but as you never lose your willingness to try, you'll always be able to rise above your situation!

Took My Freedom For Granted

I think that I took my freedom for granted, because even after I was on probation - I acted like I could go home anytime of the night.

I thought I could get away with not going to court, that I would not be suffering any consequences, but now I'm back here in Juvenile Hall - even after all my warnings! So, I think I took my freedom for granted.

-Jocelyn

From The Beat: Well, yeah, you were living in a bit of a fool's paradise, thinking it would go on like that without consequences, just because the consequences were not immediate. Maybe that's what you need to learn: how to look past the immediate situation, realizing that there's more to your future than the next moment's pleasure, treasure, or whatever.

Disconnection

I feel so hopeless, and I feel disconnected from my family. I don't know how to get back connected with them. But now I am connected back with my grandma, because she is trying to help me change so I can come home and take care of her.

Now I'm so close to getting to go back home! I don't want to mess that up. I've been thinking about all the things I've did (to the point where the judge won't let me come back home), and I don't know what to do to make them happy and not to disappoint them anymore than they already are disappointed in me.

-Meli(lena)

From The Beat: It will take time to win back your family's trust. Your job is to keep doing right day by day, everyday, even when they don't say, "Good job!" or "We can see the change in you!" It's up to you to make the change come true and stay, too. Your grandma's already there helping you. And after a time, your family will see it, too - probably just when you thought they never would see through the past to find the new you!

I Blew It...

... by coming to the hall.

-David

From The Beat: So now what are you going to do to "unblow it"? When you get out, do you have a plan set up so that you don't have to come back? You're messing with us again, writing these one lines, when we know you have so much more to say!

I Have Always Wanted To Learn About Basketball

Basketball is just outstanding! The moves you can do with the basketball! You can just key it up any kind of way. When you slam dunk the ball, it's more experiencing than layin' it up. Free throws is kind of amazing, too, because you can just take your time to shoot the free's, while the crowd is trying to see if you're going to miss.

-Cameron

From The Beat: Yeah, it's a fun and exciting game. But it sounds like you already know a lot about basketball. Of course, learning to play as a member of a team, where everyone plays a role, is a whole different understanding of what it means to play basketball. The greatest often fail to learn it till their latter days of playing in the fabulous NBA!

Home For the Holidays?

What's up wit' it Beat? This that boy that stay goin' all out to stay ahead of the game. But as you could guess, I slipped up and ended up back in the Hall for a violation!

I should be out in a couple of days. I hope so, but it's all up to my probation officer and the judge whether I get to go home or have to go to Camp Sweeney. I hope I get out to go home for this holiday season!

-Beam

From The Beat: So you tell us, did you make it home on a release or even a home pass from Camp for twelve hours on Christmas Day? Or are you still in the Hall waiting to discover your fate? You can't stay ahead of the game you've been playing. In the end, it's always "no win"! So change your game and quit slipping back into pain. Quit and go legit, mayne!

The Life I'm Living

The life I'm living is the life of a set-up artist. It's shady sometimes.

You think everything is all good, but soon as it gets good — everything gets spoiled as some old milk that's been sitting in the refrigerator for several months!

If you don't believe me, ask Stretch, Turk, T and Fresh.

They will tell you! Its cold out here! Real grimy! Don't let these set up's be you! Sometimes it not a good outcome!

-Domo

From The Beat: You're setting yourself up in the long run. What looks good just keeps you addicted to a life that never has a good outcome in the end — not for your enemies, not for your friends, not for you. And getting locked up is coo' — it even protects you — from where you're heading, foo! Unless you change what you do and never look back, there won't be a second act.

Five Months

Man, I've been here at Camp for five months, exactly, today! The time went by hella fast. It feels like I got here two weeks ago, but that's a good thing. The judge said six-to-nine months, but hopefully it will be only six — then I'd only have on more month left!

I'm hella happy though that time is passing so quickly, 'cause I'm tired of hearing the staff call my name. It seems like that's all they do, even if I'm not doin' nothin' — they still always callin' out my name: "C— this!" and "C— that!" Ya feel? That ain't coo'! Yadada?

Well, yeah, last week I messed up. I mad a tattoo gun here at Camp and got caught with it. So they sent me to the Hall. Now I can't go home! I might not even get to go home for Christmas. That's hella sad. And the other messed up thing, is that I can't make it to the wifey's birthday this weekend! I feel bad.

Well, I hope I go very soon. I'm tired of this Camp. Well, that's it for now. I'll write again next week. I'm out.

-Lil' Soldier

From The Beat: Tattooing dots will not win you friends among the counseling staff or get you home for the holidays, that's for sure! And we heard that a few others got sent to the Hall for planning to jump a rival or something, so any gang-related activity is sure to get more than a little punitive attention. It was much more important to get home this weekend for that birthday party. Oh well, live and learn. Are you keeping yourself busy there? 'Cause that sounds like the sort of mischief that boredom brings to a naturally active mind. Whether you're out in a month or two or three, the key is how you handle yourself after that. We can't get the image out of our heads, seeing your brother back in the Hall facing serious charges just for some stupid choices around drug use and driving around on New Year's Eve. Stay chill if you do get a home pass, and after your release, too.

What's Up Beat Within?

me nothing just up in the hall
keepin' in it solid
just wondering why every time
i come to the hall
i find out somebody has died on the streets
but it's okay 'cause
i'm gonna be out soon
i just want to take this time
to tell all my solid ninjas
to keep they heads up

-Lil' L

From The Beat: If by "it's okay" 'cause you'll be head-hunting as soon as you hit the street, man, you might as well have been the one who did the deed to the ones you love who died in the street. Every death turns the wheel of death, back and forth so fast even the grim reaper gets out of breath — and none of it is okay. If your friends had been lucky enough to be off the street and in the Hall, they wouldn't be dead now. Think about before you get out! (And we'll never put an RIP when you call for vengeance in the street — 'cause you're disrespecting the deceased who looks down from heaven with God's angels praying for peace.)

What's Up With It Beat?

It's your boy, Lil' Sisco, and I am writing just to say that I am out in one more week. I am going to a group home. I also wanted to say what's up to my homies up in maximum security. Just stay strong and don't let the staff or the other ninjas mess up your program. Just do your best so both of you ninjas can get out soon. All right then Beat. I'll see you in the outs.

-Lil' Sisco

From The Beat: Follow your own advice on doing a good program, 'cause from a group home you have an end in sight if you can just stay patient, chill and do right. Then you take those qualities with you back into your home life — don't just go back to what you used to do each and every night. Learn from your mistakes and have better days.

Disconnected

I feel disconnected from my brother, Mike Jonez, 'cause it feels like we haven't been able to kick it like we used to.

And it's going to be a long time probably until I see him again, 'cause of his case. But no matter what, I'm still going to love him like the big brother he is — love you, brah.

-Lil' Vee

From The Beat: Love is something they can't cage. So keep that love in your heart alive no matter what happens in his case. And when you get released, get your life together and blaze the trail on how to stay free so that when he gets out, he too can live happily forever after, free!

I Blew It When I Got Arrested

Yeah, I blew it: I blew it when I got arrested and came to the Hall. Now that I blew it, I'm locked away from society.

I can't see my child or my baby'mother that is expecting a newborn. I can't see my mom, or the rest of my family. I can't go to school, where I was making good grades. I can't play sports in high school. I can't go to work to support my kids.

I'm missing my freedom. What I'm doing to get it back, is staying out of trouble here in the Hall, so that I can get released and go back to school, go back to work, go see my girl, and go see my family and kids.

-Dysean

From The Beat: No, you blew it before you got arrested. You blew it when you started living that life style that eventually led to your getting arrested, 'cause you always do get caught for something sooner or later. Those who believe the mistake was in getting arrested, go back to crime because either they didn't get arrested for their criminal hustle or they think all they need to do it get slicker. So you're way ahead of them, because you know you need to go back to doing what's right and living your family-oriented life.

Turning Shhh into Chicken Soup.

I'm just sittin' here tryna make nothin' into somethin'. As for me, it's lookin' ugly. They keep on transferring my court date every month after month. I'ma hella mad, but you feel me, it gives me a chance to make chicken shhh into chicken soup.

-Mike Jonez

From The Beat: It's funny because that's exactly what you've been doing. You have a whole bunch of writing in this issue, and it's all about difficult things: Your girl, your case, the irritations of lockdown, the pain of an uncertain future. But you've taken all this dark material and made powerful and moving pieces out of it, poems, essays, and writings that show how much more there is inside you than the DA or the judge will ever understand. Keep it up, we're glad to partake of the soup you put out there.

Rest in Peace Uncle Weezy

What's up with it, Beat! This Lil' Laron comin' at y'all from this unit in the Hall. Man, it's hectic out there in the streets! Last week, I got some bad news about the 'hood.

My Uncle Weezy got killed. I couldn't believe it at first, but it's really true. I'm in here stressing because I ain't gon' be able to go the funeral since I'm in here! I know he's in a better place now, but I wish I could've seen him before he was really gone.

I love you, Uncle — and you'll always be missed! Rest in peace, Weezy F Mac.

-Lil' Laron

From The Beat: It's sad, and yes even unbelievable, when we lose our loved ones to the street — even when they were living that life that we all know should be called a death-style and not a life-style. Maybe the lucky ones go to prison, though that's a hard pill to swallow. The best thing you can do for anyone and everyone still here with us, is not follow his example. Bury him in your heart and listen for his angel in heaven to tell you how to make a new start. Purified by his new surroundings, he'll tell you the truth no with no lying. Watch your dreams, and ask yourself if you imagined it was sent by God, what would it mean? It will always be — get out the street!

You Don't Understand

I don't really like people who are disconnected from my life tryin to tell me what I should do. If they understood what I was going through, then it would be different.

But it's nice that people take you into consideration. So I am grateful for it. There are a lot of people who treat you like a piece of garbage. That's why I do appreciate the consideration of others.

-Vee

From The Beat: When others who don't seem to understand what you're going through, give you advice, here are two things to keep in mind: (1) Take the best and leave the rest; (2) look for the similarities (between what they understand and what you understand), not (just) the differences. Still, gratitude is a good place to begin any thought process about improving your life in a cold and lonely world, just because it gives a positive place to stand. And don't forget to be grateful to yourself when you make an effort.

Life's a Trip

life's a trip 'cause you never know where this life style can bring you to for example, you just walkin' down the street and you get killed life is crazy 'cause you never can do what you want to 'cause you got to be on your toes at all times life is crazy 'cause one thing can happen and it will never be the same like you got to walk around with a pistol at all times life is crazy 'cause people going to talk shhh to you and doubt you but remember this — me and my people can't be stopped yeah life's a trip

-Lil' Vee

From The Beat: If you and your people "let that thang loose", then you're the problem. You're the thing that changes everyone's life for the worse. You're the ones responsible for so many others feeling they have to pack guns — and the killing of young men in the prime of life is never done. We're not saying you're the only ones, but when you talk and walk like that, you're the ones responsible for the RIP's of enemies and friends alike, equally victims of the 'hood disease that afflicts your mentality Lil' Vee — and you need a check up from the neck up!

Thinking of the Last Time

I've been locked down for so long, time just passing right by! This time stuff do not stop for anyone on earth.

I just see it because of all the time I'm doing at Camp Sweeney and the Hall, I could be at home going to school, chilling with my family, kicking it with my girlfriend. But I'm not because I'm here at Camp, trying to do this lost time.

But everybody that's on yo' way to Camp, do something with your time here. This is so easy! Then when you get out, don't let time pass you by anymore — because I'm not!

-Mar Mar

From The Beat: It's coo' that figured out how to make the time pass by fast at Camp, and staying busy is key. But you need to learn more than that, if you want to stay free. Yeah, make your time meaningful on the outs. But don't just chase after excitement till you blow out like an overheated tire on

This Camp Life

Man, I been here now for a good two months and some change, but every morning I wake up, I fightin' with my thought of what I should do!

On one side, this Camp biz ain't for me! I feel like I am gonna get VOP'd (violation of probation) within the next couple of months for some stupid stuff. So — I feel like just cuttin' out to do what I do on the outs till I get caught up again.

But then on the other side, I'm real close to gettin' my diploma, and I'm workin' on my GED so that when I get out, my life will kind of be more straight than before.

But that thought of being a sitting duck, waitin' to get popped, and havin' to start all over somewhere else! I don't know what these next couple of months hold for me, but I'm gonna be on my toes, ready for whatever.

-Lil' Boxer

From The Beat: Staying strapped won't stop you from getting clapped. In fact, it will attract bullets like a magnet, 'cause you will just keep falling deeper into the havoc. Jesus said, "Be cunning as the serpent and innocent as the dove," not "act like a sitting duck." Stay on your toes by all means, by which we mean mentally acute, sharp enough to stay away from trouble and the people and places that attract it. Don't let your fear drive you toward destruction. Don't be like a moth flying into the flame that will destroy it. Stay smart. Don't run. And don't give them any excuse to VOP you, but whatever happens — keep your coo' and see it through. Keep working toward your diploma and studying for your GED, and then get a legal job to get paid after you're freed. Man, you could even start out a few hours a week at The Beat. Just don't break weak and run. Hang tough! Enough is enough, and it's time for a change. Don't be the victim of your own wriggling brain, creating phantoms of fear to drive you insane.

A Set Up

What is it, this be Lil' Gumby coming at it from behind these musty ALACO walls. Yes, yes your boy is back again on some stupid doo doo dumb stuff, but I ain't got time to speak on that dumb stuff! But what I do got time for is letting all you folks know that what the business is, so peep game.

I got wrapped, probation set me up in the streets of Stockton not knowing what's going on but I ended up getting wrapped. But I'm gone stay up folks, I'm signing out.

-Lil' Gumby

From the Beat: We know that the system is set up for you to fail, but we wonder if sometimes you set yourself up to fail too? This is a hard question, but we are very interested in your answer, 'cause why would probation want to set you up? What was the set up?

Do Your Thang, Part 1

Beat Within what is it! Man I do see what's going on up in here and how so many kids get locked up. It's a shame that so many of us are locked up, seems like nobody wants to change in here right now, and if we did the county will be shut down. Their people won't be making no money, that's how it should be. I am just wondering why it had to end up this way. You know we should have done better but you know some of us was just young, dumb and stupid.

You know I've been coming to the hall since I was 12 years old for car jacking and a robbery. That was my first case. Now I am just running from group homes. You know this is my last chance before I see the "Y" so I am just saying do yo' thang for a life time.

-Lil' Dirt

From The Beat: What's doing yo' thang for a lifetime? You are one screw up/poor choice until you see the "Y" or worse, so what will it take for you to get on the right page? What's your plan? We hope doing your thang doesn't mean landing a life sentence. What do you really mean by do yo thang?

New Rules At Camp

What's up, Beat! This the homie Tony from Fremont up here at Camp — hella mad, because the Camp just came up with hella new rules!

I guess the homies are too deep up here now. We can't even sit at the same table without staff separating us all. We can't even do push-ups in the dorm anymore. They say reasons why, but we all really know why: It's because we all be bustin' down!

There's kids here goin' to the Hall left and right. But they really can't control what we're doing when we're locked up — or in the street! Feel me? And I just can't wait till I get back to the streets with homies and do my thang. And I'm out.

-Tony

From The Beat: Who are you kidding? The kind of so-called freedom you are celebrating here, the out-of-control kind, will just have you buried or in the penitentiary. We know you've heard this before, but you're not feeling us. You're volunteering for no freedom at all — death — or being controlled everyday in every way except for your whispered plans to assault whomever, which will just get everyone locked down for weeks. This Camp is Disneyland compared to the Pinta, and it may be your last chance to learn to control yourself — in here and out on the street. We don't work for the system. We're here for you. Wake up, foo'!

What I Miss

i miss being free
i been on probation for about two years
and now i'm 'bout to be eighteen
i miss kickin' it with my homies
smokin' hella weed
and drinkin' all summer
i miss comin' home late
with no curfew to worry about
i miss wakin' up at about one or two o'clock
to get the day started
i miss my two lil' brothers
and most of all i miss my whole family

-Tony

From The Beat: It sounds like you're ideal for taking a grave-shift job that holds no appeal for most. Then you can make your pay while you stay out late, and not trade your freedom or your life for the money you make. Smoking weed and getting drunk all night, every night of the summer, makes for a cool memory probably, but if you try to return to that life — it'll be a bummer! Get yourself locked up in the adult system just 'cause you were too drunk and high to listen to your own first mind. Nah! Time to grow up 'cause you've served enough time — time to be a man and stop acting like a child just 'cause you can. Think about your lil' brothers a little more, and maybe you'll understand why you need to make yourself a better plan.

Connection

I have a really good connection with my girl. We can talk to each other about anything. When we're together, everything feels so perfect and so right. I've been with this girl for three and a half years. I'm gonna marry her one day. I know it. She's the most important thing to me in the world. No joke. I would give my life for this girl. She makes my life complete, and I never wanna lose her. We've been through so much together, but nothing can take us apart.

Right now, were both going to group homes because we wanted one night of fun. We should have stayed home during our house arrest. We've made it 3 1/2 years already. So I know we can make it through these group homes. I love you baby girl! Always & forever

-Jake

From The Beat: Emotions can run real deep as you can attest to this. We're really not any love experts, or anything of that nature. All we can say is do what you're suppose to do and hopefully things work out for the best! But also remember that the next one night of fun can mean many nights of misery and heart ache.

RIP Rascal

this the homie savage
from berkeley
i remember cuttin' class
to go drink and smoke
sometimes we would
catch some of our rival
gang members slippin'
and that mess would have
our moms at home trippin'
he was on the street
kickin' it with the homies
when some of the rival
gang members drove by
and let loose —
i remember him
he would ride to the fullest
'till he got hit with them bullets

-Savage

From The Beat: All those battles you fought with rivals and thought you won, were just set-ups for your homie Rascal to die by a rival's gun. It's like you're trapped in a dream machine, and not even your close homie's death can wake you to what life really means. He's gone forever for the briefest pleasure of a G-ride across town. If only someone had loved him as much as his mother did, instead of loving the gang above all others and therefore led — or followed or praised — his crazed desire to ride on all rivals, it might have been enough to insure his survival. So he died at a young age, 'cause his homies loved him less than they loved excitement and rage, false pride that ends in a grave or lives in a cage. Come on Savage, for Rascal's sake and every homie's mother's heartache — make a change. Lead those you love out of, not into, this endlessly savage game.

Camp Is Easy

This Isaac aka Lil' Black. I'm up at Camp Sweeney. Man, this shhh hella easy, man! Ninjas run they' mouth like they get offa something though. Feel me?

All you gotta do is keep yo' mouth shut, and the staff won't mess wit' you. So, if you come — don't run! To all the ninjas in the Hall —

-Lil' Black

From The Beat: You've got Camp figured out. Now if you could figure out how to stay free after you get released, it'd be all good. But as long as you claim your squad in the 'hood, which shall remain unnamed — you set yourself for pain. This program is the system offering you one last, easy chance to change.

Nothing Much To Say

Q-vo Beat? Just touched down yesterday and wanted to say "wassup" to all the homies. What's crackin' and stay solid. If you reading this keep your head up and be solid. As for me, just right here in the unit staying solid. Trying to stay sucka free. But it's hard when the whole unit is full of j-cats. So when I get out I'm gonna blow hella trees and make hella money. I'm just trying to step my game up. They can't hold me that long for a punk violation. But it's nothin'. 'Till then I'll be livin' that Alameda Co life.

To all my loved ones, homies and my mom, I miss y'all. Al rato.

-Dough Boy

From The Beat: Do you think that "blowing hella trees" and "make hella money" helped put you in the halls? Maybe not the "hella money" part if you were doing it the right, legal way. But if "staying sucka free" is really what you're trying to do, then why would you do the things that can violate you again? And put you right back up in there with those you're not trying to be around? Is that really "staying sucka free?"

The Beat Sucks Really Bad

I hate this 'zine! The Beat is wack! And whoever ain't putting my pieces in — smoke crack! Something wrong wit' they ash! They too stupid to know how to put my piece in there? So this goes out to the fool that's not putting my writing in! Oh, and stay off my shhh — you on my shhh!

-Lil' Man

From The Beat: We do the best we can. Hope this display of temper makes you feel better. Maybe if after your release you come down to our offices and work for The Beat, you'll be a little more understanding of the immensity of the project taken on and completed each week by a handful of people. You'd be welcome.

It's Time

This Lil' Rony. Yeah, it's time to change how you get your money and how we live. Time to go to school and square up, but always stay solid. Ninjas gone always get money, just be smart. 'Cause we ain't never all out at the same time. So to all, keep it solid and be safe.

-Lil' Rony

From The Beat: What you say is true! We can feel the concern that you have not just for yourself, but for your bra's as well. We believe one way that you can show this real concern is to show them how. Lead and pave the way, so those you care for can see how it's done and follow in your foot steps. We believe you can be a leader and now you have an opportunity to lead in the right way!

What I Wanted To Learn About

I have always wanted to learn about cars, and engines. I always wanted to know how an engine can move a car.

I also wanted to learn how to make car body parts. Also engine parts to make my engine faster. Make my car look more faster and smoother, with extra down force to cut through the air.

-Anthony

From The Beat: What's stopping you from doing so? Are there any auto mechanic courses at your school? Sequoia Institute in an auto mechanic school for after you graduate. You could get some books from the library to study while you're waiting to get into that type of school, or class. You have the thought/idea, now's the time to bring that thought/idea to life. Don't hesitate!

I Have Always Wanted To...

I have always wanted to learn how to read a woman's thoughts. I wanna read women's minds. I think women always have something funny, or something I would find interesting on their mind. Most of the time when I holla at females I wish I could see what's on they mind. When girls are looking at me and my squad shine, what are they thinking? When women degrade they selves for men, I wish I could see what's on they mind. Maybe women would love too see what I'm thinking, and I would tell them I got money on my mind.

-P-Stank

From The Beat: There's a movie, "What Women Want," with Mel Gibson about this. Haven't seen it but you might wanna check it out. However, it would be too easy to know what others were thinking. Because then we could act how they would want us to act. That wouldn't be real because we may be portraying someone we're not. Interesting and/or original thought though. We'll give you that much.

What I Wanna Be...

I want to be a hardcore rapper when I grow up. Have hella money, pearls and the world on me. Then I want to smash on all of the weenies in the world. Then I want all of the tight cars. Then I am going to smash on all of the rappers that I hate, in front of the whole world. Then I want to make them quit their jobs. Then I am going to run in their house and take all of their money. Then I rob them every time I see them. They gone give me money every time I see them. Then I would freak their girls in front of their faces.

-Unknown Rapper

From The Beat: That's a lot to be doing. Maybe you could do all of these things, maybe not? On a more realistic level, how about setting some goals that you could really achieve and then build your way up from that? You started off alright but then you kind of went way out. Let's bring it back and start over from there. What do you think?

Life Situations

I wonder when I'm leaving because I have straight release, and I'm trying to get out go back to school and catch up on my school work for I can get all of my credits and get in my right grade. I need to do all of this so I can go back home and get out this group home, because this is not the right place to be. But first I have to get out this juvenile hall system so I can take care of my sister, and my son. Those are the two most important parts of my life and if anything was to happen to them I'll go bad.

That was all I had to say but I'll be gone soon so hope to hear from you next time Beat. This is for my little brother and sister.

-Big brother

From The Beat: We wish you the best of luck out there! Tell us how I came to this? Given all the love that you have from your family, what threw you off course?

A Place I Like To Kick It

I like to kick it at the park and smoking with them.

-Jesse

From The Beat: What do you like about smoking at the park? Is there any place you like to kick it where you won't put yourself in danger of getting in trouble?

Getting' To Work

What's up Beat this is Lil' Pug. This goes out to my bras that's on one. Yeah, we're still here and ain't goin' nowhere. I'm in here with my bras. Most of time you can catch me getting chippas because that's what it's all about because that's how you eat. And on the outs I eat. I don't let nobody get in my way when it's time to eat if you do you ain't gonna stand for too long. But it's good, like my daddy used to say if a ninja gets in your way when it's time to get that money, bust that ninja's head. But he said don't be stupid when you do it. If your squad ain't getting money y'all boys need to step it up because y'all ain't about getting money like me if I get hungry I'm going to get to work.

-Lil' Pug

From The Beat: Busting heads isn't going to get you very far. Look where you sit now youngstas! You might think you are getting rich quick when you are free, but someone will catch you slipping and turn around and bust your head back. Think of what it really means to get to work. What you are speaking about is a one way ticket to jail or worse.

RIP

RIP to my bras, we keeping it lit bra. Just know we luv you bra. Keep our heads up and show us how to be safe, 'cause we gone always stay solid. Rest In Peace to my bra's who've passed on.

-Lil' Rony

From The Beat: Out of respect to your bra's and this educating, weekly newsletter, we did not include the names of your bra's. It's a tragedy when young men and women lose their lives before they've had a chance to live life. This is becoming a common theme and it disturbs us all. What can be done to change these rising statistics? What can you do to avoid becoming one of these unfortunate statistics? There's a lesson to be learned here and we hope you can gain something from these senseless tragedies.

Took My Sister For Granted

I had blew it with my older sister. I had taken her for granted when she had got her job. She told me if I'm good in school she would buy what I wanted. I lied to her. Told her I'm getting good grades and all that stuff. She was true to what she said. She bought me what I wanted. When she got my report card, she was very mad at me. She was yelling at me, telling me that I got to get my act together. She said she wasn't gonna buy me anything 'till I get my grades up and my act together.

-Jordan

From The Beat: Was it worth it? Luckily she's still willing to do that for you so you can do good. Sometimes people offer to help us out and we take advantage of the situation and/or person. She's trying to help you out. Wouldn't it be nice to help her out by doing what's she's asking? You both have a chance to be happy but only you can make that happen.

I Blew It With My Brother

Yea I blew it! My big brother use to tell me to be cool. Before I came to jail my brother told me don't be playing with guns. Because I'm going to end up in jail. That's how I blew it. I went to jail. If I would've listened to my brother? He told me to stay. I did not listen, so I blew it with my freedom. I should not have played with guns and be with the people I should not hang out with.

I blew it with my brother. He's hella mad at me. So I'll try to listen to my brother next time. I will listen to my brother and just stay away from my so call pantas. R I P to all my fallen homies.

-Lil' Sammy

From The Beat: When people are giving us good advice and we don't do what they're advising us to do, we usually end up regretting it. How come we can't understand that they're only telling us this out of love? At least now you know what to do the next time your brother advises you.

A Friend That Blew It For Me

Man I have a friend that blew it for me because I'm locked up for something that I didn't do. And now I'm doing time for him. So that's something that he blew for me. Being out.

I remember that I blew it for myself over a deal. I never had the chance to live a regular life like other people. Like going to school and graduating from high school. Having not to blow it for me to graduate from high school. I won't blow it for myself and my auntie. Every time I mess up I blow it for my self.

-John

From The Beat: We had to take out some of your piece because it wasn't appropriate. But since you know that "every time you mess up you blow it for yourself," what can you do about it? We've all blown it in some way so don't feel alone. But we have to stop blowing it sooner or later. Hopefully it doesn't come down to where you've blown all your opportunities. That would really be sad!

People

people always say "real talk" but i know they lying worst thing they seen in life is their pet dog dying talking 'bout how they got kids but it's their lil' sister crying

friday night they up in the house cooking and frying they ain't from the spot they claim to be and if you wanna disrespect be prepared for the result got big things that'll hit like lightning bolts i'm ready for the war been prepared since birth and if you want to continue you'll be back in the earth you can't get to me i'm my worst enemy you can get a lil' close but you won't be a friend to me be careful your life's in danger

how can you know me when i'm my own stranger the one and only i'll never be replaced keep it real you're in for a bogus case you ain't solid, ain't never been real snitchin' your way out, takin' a deal i'm me, if you got a problem then step up we can do it this way or that way, i don't give a what

-Big Vic

From The Beat: This entire poem is written in your worst enemy's voice, and it makes The Beat look bad when calling out gangstas to war is your choice — but worst of all, despite it being the dominant rhetorical form of claiming "respect" in the Hall, when you meet the one to take you on, it not only sets back the changes you've begun and messes up the good program you've done — it threatens your life after your release, 'cause this is the symptomatic talk of someone still suffering from 'hood disease. If it weren't coming from you, we wouldn't print it at all; the best we can hope is that you hear our warning call — and turn your mean mug on the enemy within so you can bury him and let your new life begin. Our words may seem frivolous to you at best, but in truth it's a matter serious as death, or even more serious, all right, 'cause it's about your quality of life. Peace on earth, good will to men! All right we're done preaching, young friend.

Court Sentence

What's up, Beat! This yo' boy Woody. Anyways, last week I went to court, and I really thought I would get released, but then the judge hit me, talkin' about I have to go to Camp!

That same day, I called my mom, and she said that my co-partner had gotten released. For a second, I was stuck. Then it hit me! At first, I didn't want to admit it, but my so-called co-partner had gave me up to the judge. I never would have thought my friend I grew up wit' and kicked it wit' would snitch on me!

But the truth is that I ain't mad at him. I'm gonna just do my time here at Camp and move on with my life. And I ain't gonna be stressin' hella hard. I'm gonna just handle my business. Anyways, I should be gettin' out for a home visit for Christmas pretty soon. So I'm gonna take care of my business and do my program.

-Young Woody

From The Beat: The system is way more arbitrary than you might imagine. So don't be so sure your lifelong friend "snitched" on you, and don't go off doing anything half-cocked behind what is merely a suspicion on your part. And if by "handle my business", you mean getting back at him — we strongly suggest that if you see him at all, which may not be a good idea while you're feeling like this, approach him with the love in your heart you've always shared and just talk over what's going on. Chances are it was just luck, or intangibles you can't account for (outside family situations, the different arguments made by different defenders or even by different DAs — 'cause a DA can turn a judge's decision with the argument he/she presents, for sure; etc.) — you were not tried together, right? So cool your heated brain, maintain, and think about what you can change in your life so you never have to be locked up again for even a single night, 'cause your key to getting and staying free is not about anybody but you! Handle that business first and last, make a break with your past.

Focused On Freedom

What I took for granted was my freedom. See what people don't understand is that this generation has a hard time staying focused. But anyways I gave my freedom up because I made the wrong choices. Really my family don't have no money so they can't really buy me everything I want. See ninjas be frontin' like they thugs and they ballin' and shhhh.

I'm gonna tell you like everything. I don't have nothing. Everything that I do have I've worked for in some kind of way. I'm no gangster nor no hustler. I represent the struggle you feel. So for everybody locked up from the hall to the pen keep your head up, don't let them bring it down.

-Lil'

From The Beat: Thanks for keeping it real "three five." Poverty is a problem that people in power just don't understand. It's up to us to educate them, and ourselves, about how to succeed in the struggle. As for your nickname, we do not support names that are numbers, sorry.

If The World Was a Stage?

If was to be on stage, I would be myself. I would stick to the G-code. I wouldn't sugar-coat, and I wouldn't think I'm better than others.

I would get rich, then put my ninjas in it. Then after I reach that point where I have enough, I'm going to stop the show life and start putting my money in real estate — plus open some black-owned stores and give back to my community. That's all I have, Beat, until next time.

-Lil' B

From The Beat: Hey, we feel you on the real estate investment, not to mention the black-owned-and-operated stores in your community. But the G-code won't take you there. It's more likely to have behind bars if not buried in a graveyard, with all the enemies you will have made (not to mention friends who aren't really friends). Why not finish school and then study to get a realtor's license? Then trade your way with other people's sales and purchases, 'till you're ready to buy (and sell) for yourself!

Disconnected

As I sit here disconnected from family, potnas, and the block, I think to myself about how so many people said I should change. Or maybe one day he'll change and better himself. It all made sense to me because to me because none of them would want to see me in a place like this but I didn't care what they said. I took everything for granted and kept doing my thang but, it's not a game I found that out instantly. I got so many potnas dead and in jail that I just decided to change.

-Willie-Bo

From The Beat: How are you going to change? How are you going to resist temptation and make the hard decisions? We have faith in you. Your plan could inspire some others to do the right thing.

A Week Wit'out Dreads

what's good wit' it beat
this yo' boy dell
cut them dreads feel me
'bout to go to this group home,
feel me
pimp it — you already know
should be leavin' this week
yeah i'm back like Freddy cougar
ha-ha-ha-ha

-Dell

From The Beat: Don't come back like a sav' to the same spot you used to have or everything will again go bad. Come back new, ready to do what you really need to do, to stay free from the system and just be you. Get a part-time j-o-b and finish school — put legal pay in your pocket and do your do.

Living in the Streets

sometimes i wonder if i
am going to make it to twenty-five
because every day people die
and i could be one of them
i could go on a home visit
and get killed
probably not this year or next
but i can happen
i try not to be a bad person
but when it come' to the streets
i think something different
but when i get out
i'm going to try not to be bad
stay up my ninjas

-Nacho Cheese

From The Beat: Living where you do and with your past, you have to give change a one hundred per cent effort if you want it to last. And we mean with no reservations, like a no-matter-what situation, as if a choice of life-or-death is what you're facing — 'cause what you write above could be right, and stray bullet could catch you on the spot day or night. Forget about trying not to do bad and start doing good, 'cause a year or two more like you've been living in the 'hood ... well, let's just say, change your habits. Stop living the life of a savage with your friends, or you're sure to meet a savage end.

Love Is Key

love is a key, baby
my bad yeah still living filthy
i'm sorry for being guilty
baby i'm locked up and the key
is you and my heart to you
— no baby, don't walk away
'cause look at my magic
baby i built the world for you
i'm trying to share it with you
but i can't wait —
'til two thousand eight
gee baby

-Lil' Walt

From The Beat: Sweet poem that brings home your desire that the fire of love refuse to be extinguished before your time is finished.

Berkeley

where i be at
they always sellin' crack
r i p lil' meezy
r i p miguel
r i p ron e-z
wish you could come back

-Little Larry

From The Beat: It's not like they all died from the dope game, but all the same, if you value your freedom or your life — it's time to change.

Ready To Leave

When I'm in my room all I want to do is get out of the hall. Days sometimes go fast because I might be working. When I leave I'm going to have to go to counseling and other programs, but I don't want to. So all I want to do is get free from all that probation and programs.

-Hot Sauce 150

From The Beat: The only way to really get free from all that is to complete them all. It may be tiring and you may not want to do it, but just keep in mind that you're doing it so you won't have to continue doing it. Hopefully that thought is enough to push you through 'till completion. Then you'll be free from probation and the juvenile system. Doesn't that sound good?

My Mom And Dealing With My Temper

What's up, Beat? This Nacho from Oakland. I was up in the Hall and I just came to Camp. I'm in a program for six-to-nine months, and I hope I do good — because I have a bad temper and I get mad fast!

I can't wait 'till I get my home visit, for I can go home and do what I want without nobody telling me what to do, except my mom — that's the only person I'll listen to without getting mad. Well, I'll holla next time.

-Nacho Cheese

From The Beat: You know what the victim said to the robber? That's Nacho Cheese! Nah, just kidding, 'cause we know without even having to tell you, you know it's time to change so you don't get yourself either shot or locked up with no one to get mad at but yourself! Uh-oh, we feel your temper(ature) rising! Nah, just kidding. But on the real, you need to do some work on that anger, 'cause it will undermine your best plans and put your in danger of losing your freedom or your life. We hope you're listenin' and ready to learn your lesson. Aight?

To Those That's Gone and Locked Up

What up wit' it, you ninjas! Me doing cool, pimpin' this time up here at Camp, wishin' you ninjas could be up here with me. But you ninjas ain't got the chances I got. So y'all gotta go out far!

Judge K ain't playin'! He sendin' ninjas! So for all you other ninjas that's doing y'all thang, go ahead, mob it out. It's cool. Just be ready to mob when you get yo' ash hit!

-Lil' D

From The Beat: We fear you don't grasp the full irony of your advice and that you really mean to recommend mobbing it till you are dead in the street or locked away for life in a penitentiary, and in the latter case to keep mobbing it still, keep "putting in work" till you finally get killed. No, no, no Lil' D! Open your eyes and see — it's time to shake free of this no-win destiny! Get your high school degree. Get a legal j-o-b. Live to raise a family. Don't make your freedom just history. Don't waste your chance to change, maybe!

I'm starting to understand my purpose on this planet and why I do the things that I do.

In My Room

I sit in my room thinking about you baby.
'Cause something about you baby drives me crazy,

and I lose my mind.

I really love you babe.

Without you I feel like I'm going to die.

Because I love you babe.

And I need you in my life.

I want you to be mine.

I want you to be my wife.

-Jesus

From The Beat: Those are some strong thoughts and feelings running through you while in your room. How do you keep that relationship going and strong from where you're at? Is keeping this relationship worth more than doing stuff that will send you to juvenile hall? What other thoughts and/or feelings come to you when you're in your room? How do you make it through the day with such strong feelings and/or thoughts running through you?

Man I Miss My Dawgs

when i first heard you was gone

i couldn't believe it

ever(y) since you been gone

shhh haven't been the same

i know one day we will see each other

again

but until then

you will always be remembered

and missed

rest in peace davon and weezy f mac

and the rest of all my other ninjas

that's gone but not forgotten

-Lil' Laron

From The Beat: Listen for their chorus of voices from heaven: they'll tell you it's not about getting revenge or killing. They'll tell you it's not about turf or the 'hood or pouring out liquor you've been swilling. Don't hold it down for them on the block, live your life right and don't be the next to get shot. Get out the street, your loved ones want to see you standing on two feet and not buried beneath the grass so green, enriched by worm food, yadidamean? RIP all the fallen soldiers, teach from heaven how your "dawgs" can grow older.

Who Makes The World Go 'Round?

I been on this earth for a good eighteen years, and from what I've experienced so far, I've learned that wherever I go there's gonna be haters not far behind. But I look at it this way — you can try and hate on me as much as you want, but like my homie told me, "Always hated but nevah faded!"

These fake-ass Camp people (not everybody up here but they know who I'm talkin' 'bout) tryin' to break me and my carnals — but we ain't goin' out. We too solid for their petty shhh! So all I got to say is, "Always hated but never faded!" So to all doin' time, keep it solid. They ain't on our level.

-Lil' Boxer

From The Beat: The Camp is so full of hostility and distrust, petty stuff, jealousy, testy nerves and fake curves, that it's no wonder you pull together with your homies, seeking to create a safe haven. But that group-think is what has you on the brink of throwing your life to the system so you can make this sort of rivalry your life-long mission — banging for the homeboys in some maximum security prison. Yeah, it's natural to turn to the group and seek to recoup the constant drain of what haters do to you mentally, but it's better to face the hate as an individual and unwanted penalty than surrender your fate to the group's identity — 'cause that temporary serenity born of solidarity leads straight to the penitentiary for generation after generation of faceless posterity, meaning you get lost in the collective and pay the cost of losing perspective for the rest of your natural-born life. Or you could wake up, step out, and start living your own life — no matter how many hate, don't let it seal your individual fate.

Ten Years From Now: 2017

ten years from now, yeah it's a long time

i would like to have kids

and the first boy i'm going to name mike

i would like to have a lot of money and cars

females and everything people like

but you never know what can happen in ten years

that's why i'm going to live everyday like i never have beef

and you never know where ten years can lead

-Lil' Vee

From The Beat: If you really mean what you say about having no beef, there's nothing that can stop you on your path to succeed. Yeah, of course, you'll have to work for success, and you can't let drugs or alcohol keep your mind in a mess — you'll need to focus and make a plan. But ten years is a long time if you understand how to avoid beef, so step by step by step you can patiently proceed toward your goals until the year 2017, when you look back on the decision that set you free to have money, a car, a house and a family 'cause you had no beef to interfere with your j-o-b.

Hey Beat

Heat Beat Within, this is the homie Lil' Creeper. I got myself in a position that I don't wanna be in. Now I might be doing fifteen years. I been in here for five weeks and I'm ridin' this out, stayin' strong through it all, 'cause we some G's! Now I might go to the new Juvenile Hall, and I might be in here for Christmas! And that makes me feel so bad 'cause I hurt the people that care about me! That's all. Keep in touch. I'm out.

-Lil' Creeper

From The Beat: "We" aren't doing time. You are. Yeah, "we" stay strong, 'cause "we" don't need you. "We" just keep going on whatever you do. But "we" have plans for you when you hit the pen' — "we" want to see you put in work till you're dead. And "we" don't care about the people you hurt, 'cause "we" plan to use you to do dirt. 'Cause "we" don't care about your real family just our own "family" — "we" some G's! Bleed but don't feel. And don't heal from what wounded you, 'cause that's "we" too, foo! Just tell Momma it's all good, you coo! Alrato vato. Stay trucha.

Follow Your Dreams

I have always wanted to learn about life. Now I understand that life is something when you have something to lose

I'm starting to understand my purpose on this planet and why I do the things that I do. I have very good dreams that are yet to come true. That's my purpose on earth, and I'm coming to understand life because of my dreams.

-Jermaine

From The Beat: You're using the word dreams in its sense of goals, ambitions, having a purpose in life and fulfilling it. Still you write with such abstraction we can't know what your dreams are, or your purpose on earth. To love and raise a family? To contribute to society? To be a role model to others? What?

Keep Yo Head Up

What's up Beat. This ya boy Lil' Glen getting at you real life militant right now. I'm still in these played out halls doin' dead time, feel me? PO came the other day talkin' about some I'm go try to get you in another group home, but you probably goin' to ROP. Man I ain't feeling that.

Man I'm refusing ROP off top, feel me. I ain't the type of dude to be running no miles and exercising. They might as well send me on home. 'Cause I already did my time man, but I want to get sent home on no paperwork, feel me?

To my loved ones at camp, you know who I'm talking to, keep yo' head up. As for me, I'm just about to play these played out hall games and try to keep my head up

-Lil' Glen

From The Beat: Unfortunately you will have to do something and will have to be on either probation, or parole. That's the predicament you've put yourself in. Now, do you continue to put yourself in "those played out halls?" It's up to you what you do. But remember you put yourself there. Maybe this realization will help you the next time out.

Decisions

I blew it when I was in the group home, because of my angry and my frustration — because I wanted to speed the time up. I blew out and got terminated from the program.

Now I got to go to Camp for four-to-six months, but I don't want to go. Yet I am going to do it, because I would rather do this time than my max time. And also at Camp, I would be close to home.

My point is that when you are angry, you should think before you do things.

-Young F

From The Beat: You won't only be near home, you will get passes to go home. First a day pass, then a weekend pass, just as long as you're doing a good program, not getting write-ups, dirty pee-tests or returning late from your passes. And you've learned a valuable lesson about "doing time" which is not to try "to speed the time up". Just forget about time altogether. Take each day, one day at a time. Volunteer for work, programs, sports — stay active. And if you lose a home pass, don't trip, just stay chill, let time pass and get your next home visit. Well, that's if you go to Camp at all.

I Don't Know What Love Means

Do you believe in love at first sight?

Man if you ask em do I believe in love at first man, I don't even know what love mean. I'm a pimp.

-David

From The Beat: You have the rest of your life to try and figure out what true love means, and we're glad you're honest about the fact that you haven't had it happen to you yet. But as for being a "pimp," we don't even know where to start. Do you mean it in the literal sense, where you think it's ok to have girls sleeping with other men and giving their money to you? Or do you mean it as a symbol — a symbol of being so hard and ahead of the game that you don't need to concern yourself with things that happen in your heart?

To All The Bra's

What's up? Me, waitin' to go to L-A for 12months. Don't trip 'cause I'm gone pimp that. To, keep yo' head up and do yo' thang. To, stay solid. And, keep it lit, be legit and solid. Pimp all programs and be safe.

-Lil' Rony

From The Beat: We had to take out the names you mentioned. If they're used in a sincere, care and concern way, then we're all for the support. But if they're used as just a shout out and glorify what caused y'all to be incarcerated in the first place, then we can not and will not support that. If you have any questions about what can and can not be printed in The Beat, please ask the facilitator to your unit. Thank you.

What It Do Beat?

What it do Beat, this baby gurl from Oakland. I been up in this joint for a few weeks and this ninja up in is playing with my game and that make me mad with this people playing with my game.

That ain't cool playing with my game and I just seen my lil' girl when I went to court on the 27th of this week and I can't wait to see my lil' girl. I miss her a lot, because it is hard to not be with her right now when I could be with her on my home pass right now for her to be her daddy, with me and my mother and my father if my dad was here. I just found out that my dad just passed away last night got to go right now.

-Baby Gurl

From The Beat: Baby Gurl, we're so sorry to hear about your dad. What a terrible thing to have go through, and to find out when you're locked up makes it so much more difficult. We don't know if your dad was a good dad or a bad one or just in between, but no matter what it's still painful and takes a very long time to get over. We are thinking of you and your difficult times and hoping you can be with your daughter soon.

I Don't Believe In Love at First Sight

I don't believe in love at first sight because how can you feel love ain't even known that person for 10 minutes ...so how can you get that feeling?

I don't think it's love. That is just what you are thinking at the time. It probably can be a strong feeling -- but not love.

But I have felt love before, but I think I'm right now with my girl. I hope it's love but I got too many females, so I don't know what's one I really love. But I do have love for my grandma with all my heart -- now that is love for real.

-Lil' Rome

From The Beat: There's so many different kinds of love, it's crazy. What is it about this one girl that you've been writing about the most that makes you feel like you could really love her? You've written about her a bunch of times — is she a girl you could see yourself staying true to? And if so, what is it about this relationship that feels different?

If The World Was a Stage....

If the world was a stage and I was the playwright, I'd take all the rapists and people who like to kill and people who beat little kids — out the world! Then I'd make it where Bush was not the H.N.I.C. (Head Ninja In Charge)!

Then I would have a house so big, brah, you could drive yo' car around in it like 007 — but real-real, bra! I would have everybody wit' money because people do crazy things because they need money — kill, rob, steal! They do it because they need money. And I would have people flying around like Superman! You feel me? That's what I'd do.

-Kash Money

From The Beat: What you describe of your world sounds pretty good. Wonder what we could do in the meantime to make the world more like what you imagine it should be like? One question: if evil deeds come from lack of money, why do people with all kinds of money still do evil things like make war for more money and power?

Went To Court Today

Man, I went to court today, and it was cancelled. But I didn't know that! So when I got there, they told me that I gots to go back tomorrow. I was hecka mad because I was in that cold ass room.

So I just went to court for nothing! But it's coo' dough, because I went for a ride. I got to see couple of places that I didn't see before. We took the streets because the freeway was packed.

-Jorgé

From The Beat: Now if you could have just kept that chill attitude all the way through your experience, nothing would have been different except that you would have felt better — and that's a big difference, don't you think? That's why patience pays, especially when there's nothing you can do about it.

Do Your Thang, Part 2

You know I'm doing my thang up in here not letting nothing stress me 'cause if you think too much you might flip out and shhh. Because this shhh be hurting yo' boy for real just thinking about being out so you just gotta release your stress sometimes, but I am just saying do your thang, do what's up not what's down. Stay up I am out, do your thang.

-Lil' Dirt

From The Beat: How do you release stress? Everyone reading The Beat is stressing, locked up — so share your wisdom with us on how to release our stress. Also tell us what you will be doing once you go home? YOU cant be serious if you tell us you are willing to throw it all away to a life of crime. WE hope you have retired from the b-s!

Real Learning

i have always wanted to learn about real estate

-Washeda

From The Beat: Get a book and read it

My Ninjas

my ninjas is some people i could sometimes count on the streets is where my ninjas be my ninjas is there when a ninja need to handle some street shhh bee and that's why me

and my ninjas runnin' the streets but sometimes it makes it hard for a ninja to eat

but me and my ninjas always gon' eat me and my ninjas gon' stay runnin' the streets

-Mar Meezy

From The Beat: It may be what you needed to do as a little youngsta, too young to get a job, but you'll end up eating in jails and prisons if you keep running with your little street mob. And you say a whole lot when you say "could sometimes count on"! So you need to get out the street, get your high school degree and get a j-o-b before your ninjas roll over on, 'cause every ninja in the street is always "all 'bout me" — only. It's a losing game, Mar Meezy, fasheazy.

Letter to myself

Time is precious you only live one life, so live it to the fullest.

-Jalisa Lopez

From The Beat: Truer words never said. But what is your definition of the "fullest?" We hope it's creating a safe, happy and healthy life for yourself.

When I look Into Yo' Eyes This Is What I See...

I see that I can talk to you about everything
When I look into yo' eyes this is what I see...
That we gon' be together for a long time
When I look into yo' eyes this is what I see...
That when I'm down and out I can count on you to make me smile
It was love at first sight when we laid eyes on each other
When I look into yo' eyes

-Precious Love

From The Beat: They say eyes are the window to the soul. Always look into someone's eyes to know if they are being real, and you will have the answer. In the same way, someone looking into your eyes will know if you are being real.

Untitled

All this shhh is whack, like two flats on a Cadillac. But it's good 'cause I know it's hood but I wish I could run away from this if I could. But I know I'm here for the good but I want to do good, but it's hard when you're in the hood. You got everybody going dumb and going hard thizzing.

Now I'm in jail, alone, none of my patnas here to help me steer. But they never was so I'm like damn, I thought you had my back but you whack just like crack. I know who my real patnas is. You was just a phony just like this county's fake ass macaroni. But I still got love for you, but I'm gone cut for the better.

I will say my "Hi's and byes" and what it do but ninja you ain't part of my crew but it's good.

-Knight

From The Beat: So you know that some of your patnas are phonies, but you still got love for them always...is that because you're a deeply compassionate person who sees the flaws of others and accepts them, or are you saying it because it's the thing to say. Are you fake or are you real. Do you pose or are you truthful? Are you representing or are you fronting? Think about it... Stand on your own two feet, leave this type of repping for the weak!

I hate this place I think about a lot of stuff when I'm inhere

I Hate The Hall

I blew it because I'm in here for a stupid reason. I miss my family a lot, but sometimes the days go by fast and sometimes they don't. When I'm in my room I think too much. I hate being in that cold room! When I get out I won't blow it, this is my first time here and my last time. I hate this place I think about a lot of stuff when I'm inhere. I hate the Hall.

-Anthony

From The Beat: Don't stop hating the Hall... Use that hate and everything you miss about life on the outs to strengthen your will, to make a promise to yourself that no matter how tempted you get you won't ever get caught up and come back. Next time you're alone in your room, facing that blank white wall, look at it and picture what kind of a life you will need to lead if you want to be sure to stay out. How will you do it? What habit will you have to give up? What habit will you need to pick up?

When I look into your eyes...

I see the tears your holding in.
I see the love you have for me
I see the hurt in causing you
When you look in my eyes
You see the tears rollin' down my cheek

-Sparkle

From The Beat: Nice poem, but keep writing and expand your thoughts. Tell us something about yourself, the person you speak of. You have given us little to go on.

So Mad

What's up Beat?! I'm hecka mad because I was doin' hecka good at Thunder Road but my ex-dude had to come and attempt to kidnap me! I told him I didn't wanna go but he tried to take me anyway (and no, he ain't my pimp - I don't get down like that).

Anyway, they brought me here to the hall 'cause they didn't want him to come back but he in jail now and I still can't go back and they're gonna move me somewhere two hours away so my parents won't be part of my program anymore and I gotta start my whole program over.

I donno Beat I'm just hecka upset and I mean I first I thought "aw he came to get me he loves me! And yeah he loves me but if he loved me he'd wait for me to finish my program! And I'm hecka mad and hecka hurt at the same time and this is so frustrating! And I just felt like venting. I know y'all about to tell me to just get through this and when its over I'll look back and laugh at how bad I stressed over nothing! But its hard not to! Ya feel me? Well Beat, time is up so I'm out. Stay true!

-Ney

From The Beat: We don't blame you for being so mad and frustrated. Sometimes life seems to be running us instead of us running it. It's a pretty hard place to be. The only thing anyone ever wants is to be in control of their own life. But this simply cannot be the case all of the time for anyone, so what we have to do is try as much as possible and remain calm the rest of the time. What parts of your life (being locked up aside) do you feel are within your control and what parts are out of your control? Is there any way to gain more control over the parts that are spinning out?

New Year's Resolution

My new years resolution would be to make mama proud do everything and be everyone she wants me to be. I love my mama more than anything but my actions haven't proved to my mother that I love her. I understand why she can't believe me, 'cause I'm constantly running away and disobeying her, so... my 2007 resolution is to go back to school and show my mom that I can do right.

-Gabriel

From The Beat: That is an excellent resolution. Your mamma wants only what is best for you and if you can make her proud and do yourself a favor at the same time just by going to school, what other choice do you have!

When I look into your eyes I see...

When I look into your eyes I see your pain
I see you strain
And it causes me pain

-Kat

From The Beat: It's hard to see someone you love going through it. The only thing you can do is just be a strong support.

A Little Thing Called Love

At one point in time I thought there was a such thing as love at first sight when I saw the guy I was with just before I came in here. I had a thang for him the moment I seen him.

I first saw him when I was in the 9th grade. My home girl had called so we could get some "ICE" and he was the one who sold it. And since my home girl didn't have a cell phone she gave him my number. Then he called and left a message sayin "what up, this Platinum, this my number call me back if you want".

So I called right after I saved his message. His name is Jay-Platinum. It lasted until I came here.

My family doesn't want us together, so my mom got a restraining order on him. I love him with all my heart even though he treated me like shhh. Every time I was near him I would just stare at him and smile. I remember I stared at him for a whole day. All I did was smile.

-Jillian

From The Beat: Well, considering you met him because he was dealing nasty drugs to you, we're not surprised your mom got a restraining order, but on top of that you admit he treated you like shhh. What is the matter with you girl? Are you looking for a life of abuse? What you do now will set the tone for the rest of your life. Have a little self-respect. We don't know what has happened to you in your life that would make you want to put yourself in such a position, and we're terribly sorry if it has been a difficult path, but it's time to WAKE UP and start demanding respect and treating others with respect.

The Beat Within

When I look at your picture I see despair in the veins of your arms. Bloodshot eyes looking back at me while teary eyes looking back at you... I miss you so much but you will never know I tell God every time I get a chance...

-Nesbitt

From The Beat: It's so hard to see someone you love destroying themselves. Just remember that you have to be firm with people that have terrible drug addictions. They will want to play on your every sympathy, but you will have to be strong for them and put your foot down. It's called tough love. It's painful but necessary.

When I look into your eyes...

When I look into your eyes
all I see is pain and I wish I could take the pain away
but now I don't know if I can.
When I look into your eyes
all I see is loneliness and I feel so bad
that I'm not with you
but I will see you soon
I promise you that.

-Melilena

From The Beat: It's hard to see pain in the eyes of someone you love. What can you do to help this person?

Love at first sight

I believe in love at first sight, but I don't think it's really love, I think its lust. The love just grew over time. I've been with my dude since I was a young teen and now I'm 17. When I first met my dude, I was scared to approach him so I told his friend to tell him I said "what's up wit' it?" Then his friend told him and we've been with each other ever since July 10, 2003 and still going 'cause I'M IRREPLACABLE.

-R

From The Beat: Considering your story, we're glad that you have enough perspective to know that people are first attracted to each other by looks. After that, if it works out, like it did for you, one could be fooled into thinking it was love at first sight.

Writer's Block

Yo! I got writer's block! So much on my mind...

The harm I wanna cause these dudes!

They follow my lead. Never outshine the master... understand!

They follow my lead.

It's all good when you in my face. But then behind my back, you' envious cowards, talkin' shhhh! Snitchin' on each other.

Damn. I can't even think right now!

That Brooklyn born Bathing Ape is on top!

Don't be mad. Y'all know me!

I don't sweat y'all. So I love when y'all hate.

I'm laughing at y'all. I ain't trippin'!

I'm a square dance off this Ranch when I go home. So stay up.

-Biggie Littles LCRS

From The Beat: For someone who has writer's block, you spewed a rant. Hey, youngster, everybody complains about snitches/talkers when one is incarcerated, so our suggestion to you is to wake the hell up and get the hell out! What's your plan?

My Country

TBW (The Beat Within): Good afternoon, Soldado. It's an honor to interview you. Your English is getting to be so good! It's great to finally be able to talk to you! You've really learned a lot down here at the Ranch.

S (Soldado): Yes. English is good.

TBW: How would you like to talk about your childhood down in Honduras?

S: Is good.

TBW: What was it like for you growing up in Tegucigalpa? What was your life as a child like? How did you get to the US?

S: Honduras is a beautiful country because we have girls, and so I'm a talk about my homies a little bit.

TBW: Okay, that's good. Describe your home country for The Beat.

S: The President of Honduras, Ricardo Maduro, don't like my homies, only because my homies killed his son, because he tryna get out of the gang, the click, in Honduras. The President killed a lot of my homies. He put fire in the prison and then my homies gotta get outta the country because he wanna kill my homies, but I still have homies in Honduras, but they gonna kill innocent people because they don't wanna get killed. And then sometimes when my homies try to come to America, they get caught in Mexico, Guatemala. They go to other countries, 'cause they don't wanna get killed. Sometimes they live in Mexico, Guatemala and other countries. They have clicks in Mexico, Guatemala. Sometimes my homies go to Salvador, then come back to Honduras and kill their enemies because in Salvador, it's the same, 'cause it's the same click. Then they go back to Salvador or Guatemala, and the police go tryna look for them.

TBW: It sounds really dangerous, Soldado. Maybe it's good that you're out of there. You must really miss Honduras, especially if your homies are suffering. Next week, let's talk about your personal life as a young child down in Tegucigalpa, okay? How it was for you growing up. How your family came to the US. What your life is like now in the US. Okay?

S: Okay.

-Soldado LCRS

From The Beat: The danger in your homeland must really have influenced you when you lived there. We appreciate your thoughts through these interviews, but why don't you write your own story without our help? Tell us from the heart, in your own words, what happened to you personally, when you were young in Tegucigalpa? Have you ever returned to Honduras, since you left? If so, what was it like then? Is the danger getting worse or better? What is your life here in the US like? In what ways is it like your young life in Honduras? How is it different?

Next Year Comin'

Man, 2006 is going to be a lot different from 2007, ya mean? I'm Young Jeff, so you already know how that go, feel me? I'm up outta here in June 2007. I ain't even gotta talk about the summer—y'all already know how that go. So, yea, I'm probably about to get married when I get out, to my b-m (baby mama.)

I'm only 17 years old; she about to be 21 years old on January 10th, an' we plannin' on gettin' married, but my momma gotta sign the papers, 'cause I'm still a minor. But, yea, man. It's a whole lot of shhhh that's gonna change for me in 2007, but I'm holla at y'all next Friday.

-Young Jeff LCRS

From The Beat: Young Jeff, we cut a lot of your piece because you know we don't print anything that's just about glamorizing a lifestyle that not only hurts you but others. But the rest of this piece is fine, although we suggest you really think about the responsibility of marriage. It's not just a piece of paper. Tell us readers how has becoming father affected you and your life? But we worry—if you stay stepping up your game like you described, how do you think you'll stay alive and out of the system? Your baby needs a father who is right there in his face, in his life, not one whose words he sees when you write him, or whose voice he hears when you call collect once a week, nor a dad, you, that your wife has to tell him about.

Last Time In The Beat

Wat's good wit' tha Beat? I'm just holdin' it down in tha halls. I been here for three months so far, an' I'm finally about to leave tomorrow to a group home. I'm 'bout to go knock out the lil' time I got and go home so I could be wit' tha fam, feel me.

This 'bout to be my last Beat I'm writing in, so to everybody in tha hall, keep ya head up, ya heard me.

-Darius Unit 4

From The Beat: Well, we sure hope this is your last time in the hall. But even if it is, you can still write to The Beat. We would love to hear how life on the outs is going for you.

Steppin' My Game Up

In 2007 I plan on steppin' my game up. Which means I don't want to be in juvenile. And also I want to be known as a legit African American young lady. I want to dress better, talk different and to be honest. I want to walk with the Lord and as of now I'm gone walk with my head up.

-Baby Blazz GU

From The Beat: What you might want to be is you. Not someone society, the system, your friends or "the boys" want you to be. Walk proudly!

D On Stereotypes

D: I want to write about how African Americans stereotype each other.

TBW: How does it work? Can you describe it?

D: They do it like class—lower class, middle class, upper class. It's all about class. Middle class and upper class people tend to see people in the projects as people who are strugglin' and are poor, and won't ever accomplish anything in life.

TBW: And you think that's stupid and cruel?

D: I think it's unfair because the higher class think the same thing about the middle class.

TBW: Which is also unfair, isn't it?

D: Yeah.

TBW: Why do you think that they do it?

D: Because they're better off than everybody—they're the top of the food chain. They're the higher class. It don't get no better than that. You get it everywhere—in hotels, airplanes, restaurants—first class, second class, third class.

TBW: But why are higher-class people better just because they're rich?

D: I ain't really thought about it too much. I ain't done too much ponderin' about that. I don't agree with nothing. I'm just a part-time philosopher.

TBW: Do you know anybody you consider higher class?

D: I don't really care about that. Higher-class people just got power. That don't mean their lives aren't as messed up as anybody else's. God didn't make them better. Even though I don't like this so-called man people believe in called God, he didn't make one person any better than any other person. They just different skin tones, hair, and different personalities. We're still all the same. It's not like I can fly and he can't. We're still all the same.

TBW: What else do you believe about stereotyping?

D: It's cruel, in a way. But people have to understand that if it wasn't for stereotyping, there wouldn't be no such thing as any type of jail worldwide. If you think by lockin' somebody up like an animal in a cage to correct them, it's not.

TBW: How does stereotyping get people locked up?

D: Since I came from a troubled family, as a troubled kid, since I run into a certain group, I'm a thug.

TBW: And they're stereotyping you?

D: Of course. It's unfair, because that's where jail comes in. Just because you've been to jail one time, you are now a criminal.

TBW: So how can you convince someone who's high class, who wants to stereotype you, that they're wrong?

D: You can't, because once you're stereotyped, you're always gonna be stereotyped. Here's an example: Like all gays have AIDS or are gonna get AIDS because they're messin' with another man. But really, it's only about 25% are gonna get it, not 75%—so that's unfair. Bill Clinton is even stereotyped or havin' sex in the White House, so they're gonna say he had sex in the White House all the time. See, the people who stereotypes get stereotyped by the stereotype.

TBW: Do you think that poor Black people ever mis-stereotyped rich or upper class people?

D: I don't know. I ain't never thought about that.

TBW: Talking about Black people stereotyping each other by class, where do you consider yourself? In what class? Do you ever get discriminated against by other Black people for the class they think you come from?

D: I'm below poverty. I guess, since I live in the projects, I'm lower class. When I went to the deli for my mom, a rich person with money would buy a bagel and give me the rest of his money.

TBW: Just because he knew you needed it?

D: Yeah.

TBW: That's wonderful.

D: But that's when I was younger, though.

TBW: So now that you're grown, rich people don't help you anymore?

D: I'm not trippin' on it no more because I got my own thing.

TBW: What's your own thing?

D: I'd rather not talk about it.

-D LCRS

From The Beat: Very interesting discussion of stereotyping. Do you think that almost everyone in some way stereotypes other people? Can anything good ever come of stereotyping? Does it hurt more when someone of your own race wrongly stereotypes you than when someone of another race does? Next week, why don't you write in your own words about a time that someone has stereotyped you, either rightly or wrongly? How do you think this person or these people their impressions of you? What image do you think you give out? What impression don't you want people to have of you? What image do you want to or hope to emanate?



Talking About My Baby

TBW (The Beat Within): Hi, Young Jeff. How you doin'?

YJ (Young Jeff): Doin' good.

TBW: Good, Jeff. Well, lucky you. Today you get to choose whatever topic you want to be interviewed about. Do you have any good ideas about what you'd like to talk about today?

YJ: Yea. I wanna talk about my baby.

TBW: Great idea, Jeff. You already have a young baby, don't you?

YJ: Yeah.

TBW: Tell us about your baby.

YJ: She cool. She can't talk yet but when I call on the phone, I talk to the receiver. She's gettin' older, so she's not peeling any more. Babies peel their skin when they're first born and then they get their natural color.

TBW: Does she know your voice?

YJ: Yea, she better know my voice. I been around. She got my last name.

TBW: When she hears your voice, does she coo?

YJ: No, so I talk to the receiver.

TBW: What's having a baby going to do to your young life, Jeff?

YJ: Well, I don't know for sure yet. I'm gonna have to change some things, but not everything.

TBW: Is having a baby going to give you the strength to change?

YJ: Yeah, but I'm gonna give myself the strength to change, 'cause this coming in and out of juvy is getting boring. I plan on havin' my sinister attitude, though.

TBW: What good does your sinister attitude do you?

YJ: I changed the way I think, but I still got a little gangsta attitude.

TBW: But how do you keep your gangsta attitude from getting you in trouble? What do you still have to change?

YJ: For example—I gotta change the way I do things, like criminal thoughts and negativity. But you can't change all the way. You've still gotta have a little bit of gangsta thoughts. But I wanna get married.

TBW: When do you get out of here?

YJ: June 20th.

TBW: Tell us about your lady.

YJ: Like what do you want to know?

TBW: What is her personality like? What does she look like? What do you like about her?

YJ: Everything. We been messin' with each other for one year and three months now. She look normal. She a nice person. We have a baby together, a daughter.

TBW: What's your baby's name?

YJ: Saria.

TBW: Saria. What a beautiful name, Jeff.

YJ: Yeah.

TBW: So was your baby born already, before you came here?

YJ: Yeah. Baby was born June 9th.

TBW: So your daughter will be a year old when you get to go home?

YJ: Yea. I like my lady because she's older than me.

TBW: How does that help?

YJ: She's like my mama. She takes care of me.

TBW: How does she take care of you?

YJ: Like a mother. Whatever I need—hygiene, money, clothes...

TBW: She buys these for you?

YJ: Yea.

TBW: But she already has a baby.

YJ: She has two babies—me and my daughter.

TBW: She pays for your clothes or she picks them out?

YJ: She pays for them.

TBW: How does she pay for them?

YJ: How does she pay for my clothes? 'Cause she has a job.

TBW: What kind of job does she have?

YJ: She has a job in downtown Oakland. Not at a Motel 6, at a big hotel—limousines pull up, etc.

TBW: What does she do at the hotel?

YJ: She stands at the door and lead people where they need to go.

TBW: Even though she pays for your clothes, why don't you pay for your own clothes?

YJ: I pay for my own clothes, too, but she's my older half.

TBW: Do you pay for her clothes, too?

YJ: No. I don't have a job. I told you she pays for my stuff, because I don't have what she have. I told you she have two babies.

TBW: Is it okay with her if she has to pay for everything for you?

YJ: She's supposed to help me out.

TBW: How does your mother feel about you getting married?

YJ: She cool. She has to sign for me to get married, because I'm only seventeen. She treat me like a grown man. I got hair on my face, so why not?

TBW: When you get out, are you going to get a job?

YJ: Un hun. (Yes.) But if I don't get a job and if I don't go through with it and I have a change of mind, then I'm gonna go back to the block.

TBW: And then what?

YJ: Then I'm gonna mess with the thugs. But I don't want to get into a life of crime, 'cause all that life of crime is gettin' old. I got a baby, so it's time for me to step up and take responsibility, like my baby mama. She about to be 21 on January 10th. Me, I just turned seventeen November 2nd. So for me to go out there and do the same thing over, then I'll be caught up in a big dilemma. My dilemma is a hard decision, between my family and the homies.

TBW: Can you describe what each choice entails?

YJ: Say like this: If I go back to the homies and continue what I'm doin', then obviously I'm gonna come back to jail and forget about my family and that's not what I want to do any more, 'cause I've been down that road before.

TBW: What do you want to do?

YJ: I wanna do something different.

YBW: Like what?

YJ: Go different places.

-Young Jeff

From The Beat: You sound like you're going to be a terrific father, Young Jeff, so that's all good. But it also seems like you're torn between getting a legitimate job and going right back to the block to get some illegal cash. You do have a real dilemma. It seems like your daughter is causing you to have some serious thoughts about your life. You have time down at the Ranch to think things through. If you go back to the block, you know you're probably going to get caught up again and sent away from your family. Are you prepared for that? If not, what else can you try to get a real life together for yourself, your baby mama and your daughter?

A Job With A White Lab Uniform

What's good? Yo, this ya boy Young Sparkie still in YGC B4 holding it down. You know they about to send me to this weak-ass group home in Sacramento for 18 months. But it's good. I'ma just knock this shhh out and get a job, so when I get out I can get a job that I see a lot of people walk with them lab tops. Yeah, them type of jobs. So yeah, we out.

-Young Sparkie B4

From The Beat: How do you know the group home in Sacramento is "weak-ass"? Have you been there before? If you go there with the expectation that it's weak, then it will be weak for you. If you there with the expectation that you can learn some things you don't know, that you can prepare yourself for that job you want, then it's likely to be a much more productive experience.

How Will 2007 Be Different From 2006

I know '07 would be way different than '06 for me because I would have hella mo' shhh than I got right now bra bra. I'll have hella mo' females than I got, and I'll get mo' dough, 'cause if you didn't know, I rather get mo' dough. But shhh, hella stuff would be different period since it's '07. It's just the way of life. Ninjas go have hella mo' scrapes on duces 'cause we don't ride on 20s, ya heard.

If you know Bundy, man, I gets mine man. Hella people not even 'bout to see '07 'cause hella people got they shhh pushed back and on white tees like it's the thang to do. This whole beef shhh is just too crazy, on citaz. '07 go feel different 'cause the homies not here to see it. Ninjas getting killed before they reach 17, and if you reach 17 you lucky. I know so many people that got killed at 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 and so on. It's just how our generation was brought up. But the block probably even be the same, such as the same ninjas, same rippers and the same guns that's getting bust.

I'm just tryna live life day by day, tryna survive. I know when '07 comes I'm go do it bigger than last year 'cause a ninja made it. I'm go be happy to see ma family just to get the love and support that they been givin' the homie 'cause a lot of young thugs got family that don't give a you-know-what about them, and that's when they go to the wrong path and start hitting shhh up and either getting killed and put six feet deep, or in jail 'cause that's where all the real ninjas at, either dead or in jail.

Take me for an example. I'm jail now. You figure the rest out. Ya probably was born at night, but not last night I hope. I know I'm go try to change a lot just for the simple fact that I keep coming back and forth from juvenile. I gotta find the right female to get me outta trouble. Like I said before, it's not about getting out, it's about staying out. So when you read my shhh and go back to the room, ya betta think about that if you haven't already thought about it.

But shhh, I think about that every day, but when I get out I act like I aint never even thought about it. I got the flu. I need relief, y'all. Help me please and that's my motivation, money on ma mind, money on ma mind, money on ma mind, so money is all I think of. Holla at cha boy when y'all slide back thru on mama's.

-Al-Bundy B5

From The Beat: We hope you're wrong about "all the real ninjas" are either dead or in jail. By that definition, you are either condemning yourself to a future of imprisonment (or no future at all), or you are declaring that you are not a "real ninja." You're in a trap, Al. You think of money all the time and it motivates you to action. But the action motivates the system to lock you up — without those things that you think will make '07 better than '06 — females, family, and money! If you have loved ones who care for you and support you, then every time you allow yourself to be taken from them you are telling them that other things are more important to you. So think about those things, then think about your loved ones, and tell us, which is more important? No female can keep you out of trouble; that's 100% your responsibility.

Leaving

What's up, Beat? Well, I'm back in here again. I was only out for like one month and a half. I left my program and got picked up once again. I left 'cause I missed my family and girlfriend and didn't want to be away for the holidays in some stupid program.

But unfortunately, by leaving, I let my family down and my girl. Now I'm locked up and only allowed to see my mom and pops. I can't see my sister or brother because they're under 21, and I can't see my girl 'cause she's not family. I miss and love them hella much and I should've just stayed and thought about the choices I made.

-Angel B4

From The Beat: We always wonder, when we read a piece like this, just what were you thinking? You missed your loved ones so much that you acted on impulse and put yourself back in the box, taking you further away from those loved ones. We can understand the short-term desire to be with your family for the holidays, but it's harder for us to understand whether you did any thinking about the long-term consequences, the ones you're living right now. What did you think would happen when you ran from your program?

Guess What

Well, it's this guy I started talkin' to in 2004 and he was so nice. He was my friend for a very long time. We spent a lot of time together. We went out to the movies, to the park to see horses race, and a whole lot of other stuff. I never thought I would care and love a guy so much. But 'til this day I still love and care about him. Guess what, we still together.

-Young Footz GU
From The Beat: Sounds like you have found the one — if there is such a thing as “the” one. Relationships are based on trust and honest expression of feelings, so we hope this one lasts long into the future.

Harbor Boy

I haven't seen you in a while
 You know purple and khaki ain't my style
 I've been here for three and a half months
 When I get out I'm a straight stunt
 All I been thinking about is smoking blunts
 Now that I'm in juvie I stay getting drunk
 I remember the days I stayed getting drunk
 I remember the days I hung with punks
 Damn I feel I'm all alone
 I don't like home, but right now I rather be home
 Them boys know how my mom is
 That's why I stay up at night
 Beat, I know what you gonna say
 But I stay repping the bay
 It's time to go, 'cause it's nights out
 So before I sleep I'm gone pray
 And hope I be alright.

-Rosevette GU
From The Beat: So, if you know what we're going to say why not write your own "From The Beat" response? What we're going to say is that if all you're thinking about is smoking blunts, getting drunk and planning to stunt, then we should really get to know you well, 'cause you'll soon be back! We don't get this, Rosevette, especially after reading your wonderful self-description about self-esteem and holding your head up. This piece totally undermines that one, so which is the real Rosevette?

What I Used To Do

I used to be on da block, I asked my homies for da cannon. I kept asking, then he handed me one. I was like, "This is too fat." He said, "Bust it." I said, "No." He said, "You soft." I said, "Gimme it." I pointed in da air and pulled the trigger. My wrist got jerked hard. I had to go the doctor.

-Yung Money Unit 3
From The Beat: We think there are at least two important lessons to learn from this experience. The first has to do with standing up to peer pressure. You were both right and responsible for not wanting to shoot that gun, but you crumbled under the teasing and shot it anyway. The consequences could have been far more serious than a sore wrist. But that sore wrist is the second lesson. Guns are designed to hurt and kill — and they hurt those at both ends. It takes a very strong person to say “No” to the pull of the trigger because that trigger pulls you just as much as you pull it. Think about it.

Disconnection

I feel grateful that people are trying to help, but some people just say that they are here to help you, but never do. Stuff like that makes me mad sometimes. You believe them, then nothing happens, so I just stop believing in people and stay to myself. I hate when people act like they gangsta, and they've been on the block, but never have. I take that offensive.

-CP Unit 3
From The Beat: Some people do make promises to help, then let you down, you're right, CP. Unfortunately, it happens to all of us. But just because some people disappoint us doesn't mean that all people will. The trick is to be able to figure out who is for real and who is not, and trust those who are trustworthy.

In Love

I think I am in love. I think I am in love with someone that don't know me. Someone that glances at me and does hear of me. But like I said, I think I am in love.

Everybody says he is not right for me. I try to let him go, but I can't. Every time I see him I get butterflies in my belly. I get so nervous I lose my speech. I don't wanna make myself seem like I'm sprung, it's just the effect he has on me. Yet I still am focused. It's just when I see him I get excited, but it's just puppy love. I'm still focused on myself and do love myself. So 'til then, write ya'll next week.

-Lil' Miss Young GU
From The Beat: So is this puppy love at first sight? Aren't you worried that he might turn out to be a shady jerk once you get to know him? It's strange how beautiful people can look a lot less beautiful if they act ugly. It works in the other direction, too. But we hope, that if you do get together with Mr. Perfect, he turns out to be as decent on the inside as he is on the outside.

I Thought My Homie Died

The time I'm going to write about I was trying to prevent my homie from kickin' it out so late, because that's when things usually go down. We had been kickin' it, smokin', just chillin'. I just got this feeling like it was time to leave. I was tellin' my homie, "let's bounce." He was like, "Naw, it's too early. Let's just kick back and chill." I was like, "Well, I'ma bounce and head to the house. When I was leaving I said, "All right then," to the rest of the homies, and when I got to him I was like, "All right then, be safe." He was like, "You too."

When I hopped on the bus I was getting closer to my house. I got a call from my homie sayin' there was a shooting up the street. I asked who but he didn't know any details. He just heard the shots from his house.

About an hour later I was getting calls from different people, sayin' a homie got shot, but didn't know who. I was think the whole night, I hope ____ didn't get shot. I was thinking I knew I should've just been like, "You can stay at my house," because he was on the run.

The next day when I went to the 'hood, I seen my ninja. I was relieved that it wasn't him who got shot, but still another homie got shot. But he lived.

-Smirks GU
From The Beat: This is one of those “what might have been” stories that sends a chill down our spine. Your friend was spared, but someone else's friend was not. We are hoping that this year might bring some degree of peace in the 'hood so that young men don't have to fear when they walk home at night. Has this experience changed you in any way? How?

Losing Mom's Trust

Man, umm, I took my mom for granted at a young age. Man, I had everything — clothes, shoes, money, food — everything I could possibly want until I started acting dumb, doin' shhhh when I wanted to do it, and not when she told me to. Basically I lost my mama trust and dat's tha mayne thing you need besides love.

Bein' untrusted is like bein' left alone wit' nobody on your side, nobody to really talk to. And I lost all my privileges I had. To get my mama trust back I gotta long way to go 'cause, ummmm... hey, I'm young and I didn't know what to do. But now bein' in dis situation I need her to trust me an help me, but she ain't even here to trust or help me, so now I don't know what to do.

-DC Unit 5
From The Beat: We understand how you lost your mother's trust. What we don't understand is what your plan for getting it back is. Now that you see how much you need your mother (and realize how much she has sacrificed for you through the years), what specifically do you plan to change to give back some of what you owe her? Trust can always be regained, but the ball is in your court.

Realize

The projects is where it started
 A baby born into sin
 Baptized,
 Never realized how serious life is
 Shoutin' and poutin'
 About the things that were unlike him
 Slap!

Realize it's time to wake up
 Specially if you've been wrapped up
 It's hard being a child that's being called a rape victim
 Move away
 I need time to wake up and realize
 That this life is not mine
 You see I realize.

-Baby Blazz GU
From The Beat: Are you saying that you were raped as a child? If so, we hope you have spoken about this to the authorities who could prevent the next child from getting raped, as well as to get counseling that every victim needs. You need to stay strong for yourself and your family. What do you mean when you write, “this life is not mine”? Whose life is it if it's not yours?

My 2007

My 2007 is already changed no matter what. I gotta change my ways so that I don't have to live this way. I'm 18 now so this my last time comin' to juvi, and the last thing I wanna see is the inside of 850. I gotta keep my head on straight and stay out the way. I've been doin' just fine except for my lies. Other than that I'm doin' coo'...

-I Luv It GU
From The Beat: What do you mean you've been doing fine except for your lies? Are you in here because of your lies? When you say you have to keep your head on straight and stay out of the way, that's pretty general. How will that keep you safe and free? What specific things do you plan to stop doing? What specific things do you plan to start doing?

You Blew It!

I have taken a lot for granted. I took my freedom for granted because in jail you don't have freedom. And when I got out I wasn't coming home on my probation officer's time. I also took my mother for granted because she tried to help me and I was like, "Forget it! I don't need yo' help. I'm doin' my own thing."

Yeah, I thought everything was going to be fine 'cause I didn't think I was 'bout to be up here again, and now I'm up here and I wanna go home.

-Vanessa Unit 5
From The Beat: We read variations of this sad story in every issue of The Beat. You say you thought everything was fine, but we're not sure that's accurate. It seems to us it would be more accurate to say that you really didn't think much at all, or you would have known the likely consequences of your behavior. So, let this be a wake up call to think for real — not just about what you believe you can get away with, but about the future you and how you can achieve it.

I Didn't Listen To My Mom

I blew it, like, for reals this time, because I didn't listen to the things my mom tried to tell me. She would always say, "Please, son, go to school, don't get in trouble, and always try to stay out of trouble." But I guess I didn't listen to her, and that's why I'm here, and now all I can tell my mom is, "I'm sorry."

-Victor Unit 3
From The Beat: If it took losing your freedom to realize that your mother's concerns are out of love and a desire to protect you, then maybe it has served a good purpose. When you get out, what are going to do to show (not just say) how much you respect the sacrifices she has already made for you?

Stayin' Out The System

Damn! I never would have thought I'd be back up here in YGC again. I thought for sure last time it would be my last time. But being out is different than being in these halls.

I think about hella shhh just sitting in my room alone at night. I think, "Aight, I say I'ma do this when I get out, but am I really going to do it? I say, "Aight, I ain't gone smoke," but when my homie pass that blunt, I'm I gone hit it or pass.

I don't know what the future holds, but when I get out, I'ma do my best not to come back 'cause I ain't tryna see the new YGC. These corporate ninjas making yaper off me being in here. I'm just losin' time, and I ain't got time to waste 'cause time is money. So when I get out, I'ma do my best to make sure the judge, DA, and my PO don't make no more yaper off me. That when I get out, I'ma be the one making that yaper the legit way. Stay up to the homies.

-Smirks Unit 5
From The Beat: We know what you mean when you say you have all the best intentions to do the right thing when you're locked up, but it just goes out the window when you're free again. That's the problem with freedom — it puts the responsibility on you rather than the system to keep you on the straight and narrow. The hardest word to say, sometimes, is the simple word, "No," because when we're true to ourselves, we often have to say that to people we love (like homies), and that is not easy. But you are the one paying the price for your choices, not those who tempted you, so changing is up to you. What gives us the most hope about this piece is your determination to make your money the legit way, because that's the only course that will allow you to keep your freedom.

Doing What I Want

What I had taken for granted... a lot of things like mostly trust. I lost a lot of trust from people that trusted me and had faith in me. Everything was going so good till I messed up. Told myself that I was gone do right and had promised my mom things. But I ended up doing wrong. I had my ways to do whatever I wanted, and as I look now, I think I ain't gone be able to do what I want because my mom ain't gone trust me. I did what I wanted because I knew I wouldn't get in trouble because my mom trusted me.

I'm willing to do right and prove right so I can earn my trust back for then I can do whatever I want without my mom on my back.

-Peaches Unit 5
From The Beat: Trust is based on experience. You've given your mother reasons not to trust you. Now it's up to you to give her reasons to trust you, and the only way to do that is to act in a trustworthy way. Don't expect her to trust you on your words alone; it's deeds that will determine how people — including your mom — judge you (and how you judge yourself).

When Pudd Died

I am in here for three criminal cases such as fighting. My dad passed like in 2002. I just had got evil and upset because of that. See, he was in and out of prison for eight years straight. Shoot, I never really spent time really wit' him. He was a gangster type, a beat-the-crap-out-of-you type if you mess wit' his family! He was called "Pudd" but he's James. He had got shot in the head and in the back! He was only 27 years old, one those girls call "cutie pie."

-Krystal Unit 5
From The Beat: This is a sad piece, Krystal. We're sorry that you really never got to know your dad, that he spent all that time in prison, and, of course, that he died so prematurely and so violently! We can understand how that might make you go off. But now it's time to put yourself back together and get your life back on track. We feel certain that if your dad could come and sit with you for five minutes, that's exactly what he'd be telling you to do — if not for him, then for yourself!

What Happens When I Die?

Yeah, it's ya boy, Pancho, hollerin' at you from Unit 3. Last night I was thinkin', "W'at's goin' to happen when I die? Am I goin' to heaven or hell? Is what churches and my family been tellin' me a made up fairy tale? Or when I die, it's just over, no heaven, no hell? I really don't know, but what I know is that it scares me to think about it."

I sit on my bed, like, "Damn, I'm wasting my time of my life that I will never get back, and all this time I'm wasting my life, basically. Me, I don't know what's happenin' when I die, but now I know that when I get out, I'm living my life to the fullest.

Peace. Peace.

-Pancho Unit 3
From The Beat: We think it's a sign of your maturity that you're scared of death. Nobody knows what happens after we die (even though a lot of people pretend to know), so of course it's scary. At the same time, whatever happens in the afterlife, it is this life that you know you have now that you should make the most of. And making the most of the life you have means not allowing yourself to be put in chains. So tell us, what changes do you plan to make when you're out of here that will let you keep your freedom and live up to your potential?

You Blew It

What's good with The Beat? This ya boy, Twon, coming from this Unit 3 status, ya heard? Well, anyways, my topic is: You Blew It. The first time I blew it was when I went to 33rd and I didn't go awhile. I got kicked out because I wasn't doing the program. For example, I wasn't makin' level and not bringing my report from school to the groupie, so they gave the young thug the boot.

Then, the next time I blew it was when my grandma kicked me out, too, because I wasn't following her rules. But, you feel me, they can't keep the young thug down. So for the people who blew it for themselves, take time and think about what you blew.

-Twon Unit 3
From The Beat: You're wrong about one thing: They CAN keep a young thug down. Whether they do or not depends on you. And, from reading this, it seems like you're determined to be kept down! By ignoring the groupers' rules and then your grandma's rules, all you've managed to do is put yourself in a place where you have no choice but to follow someone else's rules, right down to when to sleep and when to eat and when to talk! If doing your own thing leads to this, then maybe it's time to sacrifice some of what you want to do in order to hold onto your freedom.

Taking Freedom For Granted

I taken my freedom for granted. I wasn't going to school, I was smoking weed, and I was not making my curfew calls. So my PO violated me.

I hate the criminal justice system. I feel like a caged animal. I miss my bed and my food. I even miss taking a shower and a shhh at my house, ya heard me? But that rolla boy is out in a few. Chea boom.

-Young Torrell Unit 3
From The Beat: We can understand why you hate the system that has taken you from all you love. But at the same time, you know exactly what you were doing to land you here, so you know exactly what you have to do to stay out of here. You can hate it all you want, but the only way to avoid it is by changing your act.

They Got Paid

I feel grateful that people is trying to help me, but most of the time they be full of shhh. They only help because they get paid.

-Young Torrell Unit 3
From The Beat: Be careful not to judge everyone in the same way. Some people are only doing a job to earn a paycheck. But other people are truly dedicated to helping. And our experience tells us that everybody needs help from time to time. So be smart enough to accept help from those who honestly want to give it.

Time To Change

After I get out of here I'm gonna change my life, you feel me, 'cause jail and prison is not where you want to be. I'm the youngest girl here, only 12 years old and made a mistake in my life that I regret it.

-Krystal Unit 5
From The Beat: You are so right, Krystal — jail and prison is not where anyone wants to be, and especially not if you're only 12 years old! We don't know what "mistake" you made, but it's only a real mistake if you keep doing it...

Apology (I Blew It)

Sorry mom, I know I took you for granted.

Seemed like I loved my freedom more,

But I guess I couldn't handle it.

I was too busy runnin' the streets,

Always hidin' from the police.

I should've been going to school,

But instead I was a stupid fool.

Bein' in the streets in not cool.

I should've just went home, and played by the rules. But now I'm in the halls bein' sent to a Group Home Just because I was actin' like I didn't know my way home!

(For all the kids that hang on the streets, make sure you go home! Show yo' family LOVE!)

-Paradise B5
From The Beat: We especially appreciate the message you deliver at the end of this piece. Is this advice that you plan to follow yourself when you get out of here? What other changes do you see in your future?

Disconnection

They got a case manager to help me

But I said, "They can't help me, because I'm a dummy"

Then they said, I ain't a dummy, just makin' stupid choices

Then I seen my homies' faces

Thinking about, "It's their fault that I'm bad

And they got me so mad"

After that day, I said

"I'm not gonna hang with my homies

Because they're all so shady"

And I said to myself that

"I'm not gonna be a dummy"

-Joseph Unit 3
From The Beat: You're no dummy, Joseph. But everybody does dumb things from time to time. Your promising words are great, but in the end, it's not your words but your deeds that will determine your future. It's not enough to say it. Now you have to do it!

Right Back Again

W'a's up, Beat? Damn, I just got out, like two weeks ago, and I am back again. It's cool, though, you feel me? It's nothing to me. It's just that now I'm getting sent to a placement for one year and I don't even want to do it, 'cause when I was out, I found out that my girl is three and a half months pregnant with my baby. That really got me thinking and trippin'. I was like, "Damn... do I really want to be out when my baby is born?"

Well, I should start doing the right thing. This time I really need to stop messing around and do the right thing, so I can be and stay with my baby and my baby's mamma. Well, I just hope I get out soon and hopefully my PO will let me go home instead of the program.

Well, Beat, that's all I got. Peace!

-Smiley Unit 3
From The Beat: No, we don't feel you, and we don't see how, under anyone's view of life, coming back to this place within two weeks of walking out could be called cool. It's not cool at all, and especially now that you have created a new life requiring a new sense of responsibility. Getting put back in the box so soon after leaving is a measure of irresponsibility and immaturity. Being a father requires exactly the opposite qualities. Saying, "I should start doing the right thing..." is not enough, and gives us little confidence that you will make the changes you know you must make. Please prove us wrong!

If They Gave Me One More Chance

If the judge gave me another chance, I would change. If I could go home, then I would do what I'm supposed to do. I would go to school and, most of all, not commit any more crimes. I would try my best not to come back here again. I also hope everybody that's in here gets out.

-Ramon Unit 3

From The Beat: Is this the first time you've been in YGC and the first time you've made this promise? If so, then we hope you've learned what you need to know about being in jail, and what you have to do not to come back. But if you've made this promise before, tell us why this time will be different from the others. We hope everyone in here gets out, too, but we hope even more that when they do get out, they find a way to stay out.

I Walked Out The Door

My heart almost on it's way to bein' whole again, getting used to the fact that I'm in here. Damn it! My eyes tear up, and once again my heart is shattered into a million pieces. You ask why. 'Cause I've never spent so much time so alone; never cried so many tears; never missed someone so much; never seen a smile that could bring so much happiness when I feel the worst. Been there through the toughest times, loved me no matter what.

And I let her down havin' her coming to see me after always telling her, "I'll never go there!" I miss her smile, her always naggin'... always, no matter if I thought I was right or wrong, correcting me.

People always' askin' me what you miss the most. I shrug and say, "Don't know." Then, "What you feelin'?" The same answer.

"What you need?" That's when I answer them and say, "I need to feel my mama's love again."

-Moni Unit 5

From The Beat: If your mother is still alive, then you have not lost her love. She may be disappointed in you (as you are disappointed in yourself). She may even say hateful things from time to time. But the "curse" of motherhood is that you never stop loving your child, no matter what he or she does. Now, "feeling" that love is another story, and that is up to you. What do you need to do to rebuild your mother's trust in you, to make her feel the same pride that she once felt? It's worth making those changes for the woman who has made so many sacrifices for you. In fact, it's worth making those changes for yourself.

It's Hard To Leave Your Homies

Man, I hate when people come in your life and tell you what to do and who not to hang out with. They think that it's easy to not chill with the homies that you've been chilling with most of your life. I mean, it's cool that they try to help you out, but you ain't gon' try to change the life that you usually lived your whole life. So what I'm tryna say is: most cats ain't gon' change their lives, because they got used to their gang life and they like it.

-Lil' J Unit 3

From The Beat: You're right, Lil' J, it is very hard to change what you've known and done all your life. But the consequences of that life are also very hard — from this kiddie jail to life in prison, or worse. So, unfortunately, you're faced with only difficult choices, and you have to decide what is more important to you, the thrill of the game that risks everything, or a life that includes a family, a job, and a prospect for long years of living in freedom. If that's what you want, changes are mandatory. Without making those changes, then we'll have to conclude that you chose the consequences you get.

I Blew It

I blew it by doing bad things like smoking, not coming to see my PO, and other stuff like that. The reason why I did not come see my PO is because I thought he was going to lock me up for missing so many days.

-Tb Unit 3

From The Beat: So you thought your PO would lock you up for missing appointments, and that led you to miss even more appointments — and that led to you losing your freedom! Since showing up for scheduled meetings with your PO is entirely your responsibility, what were you thinking in the first place that made you act so irresponsibly and lose so much because of it?

RIP, Dirt

We played dis song
Without full verse

Til' da curse

Struck on March 31st
2005

When da worst came to worst
We lost mah ninja, Dirt
And I swear dis shhh hurts
And it makes you wanna burst
Into tears, thinkin' 'bout his life

Thinkin' 'bout his wife
Home alone wit' kids
Man, that shhh ain't right
But I know dat's w'at it is

Mah ninja Lou gone
And can't get 'im back
See, it's a danger zone

'Til we get 'im back
Mah heart still beating right
But I can't live wit' dat
And I don't sleep at night
Unless it's wit' a strap

-Carter Unit 3

From The Beat: We can feel your pain throughout this sad poem, and we wish you didn't have to experience it at such a young age. But it seems like violence and death are everyday events. Sleeping while strapped doesn't sound very restful to us. Are your dreams filled with thoughts of your sleeping partner? Is there a way out of this ongoing tragedy of young black men killing other young black men and young brown men killing other young brown men? What are your thoughts?

Nothing Learned

Damn, I've been here 12 times in two years. I have not learned nothing, because I keep coming back. This time I know that this shhh is real serious. Man, I've been to group homes and everything. Now I'm trying to go live wit' my mom in da East Bay and try and get a new start. Probably still do some dumb shhhh, but do it on da under. Yeah, so dis is the last time I'm write da Beat Within. So, bye.

-Rr Unit 3

From The Beat: Doing "some dumb shhhh on da under" is a promise to yourself to return to juvenile hall (and believe us, the 150 Crew in Alameda County has plenty of room for you), or even worse. How far "under" are you prepared to go? The sad thing about what you've written is that we know people (and we bet you know people, too) who have made the same kind of promise to themselves to keep doing dirt, but to do it on the under, and now they are six feet under. Think about it.

I See A Liar...

When I look in to your eyes I see a liar, but yet respectful. When I look in to your eyes I see hurt, anger built up inside of you. When I look in to your eyes I see my 'jects.

-Young Weezy Lil' Jezy GU

From The Beat: Hmmm, a respectful liar? Sounds like an oxymoron to us (look it up).

Always Wanted To Know About cats

I have always wanted to learn about cats

I wanna know why they are so cute

They start off small and they grow so fast

Why do they eat that nasty cat food?

And I know it's nasty because I have tried it

I thought it was tuna ha ha ha.

But, for real

Cats is a big beautiful ball of fur

That's why I love them

-Lil' D Unit 3

From The Beat: We love them too. What do you like most about cats? Do you have a cat now? What's his name? Has your cat ever had kittens? You can learn a lot about cats by watching them raise their young.

Thoughts On All The Topics

Do you believe in love at first sight? No, I do not believe in love at first sight because boys aint nothin'. Plus all the experiences I have seen and been through. I only believe in love coming from my family and God. I mean, I just haven't found the right one.

How will 2007 be different from 2006? Well, I want to complete the 11th grade and go to the 12th and graduate from school. And I'm gonna try to stop fightin' (Ha-Ha). Try to find a job. Just do me. Make my momma proud. Just basically try to stay out of trouble.

When I look into your eyes I see fire, a liar, messy, stranger, sadness, sometimes happy, mean, love.

-Kamay GU

From The Beat: You KNOW that we want a better piece than any one of these on just a single topic. By spreading your words among all three topics, you give us very little to understand about your life and to comment on. If you "try to stop fightin'" and "try to stay out of trouble" with no more energy or determination than it took you to write a few sentences on a few subjects, then we don't think your efforts will pay off. You need to do more, Kamay. You KNOW what you have to stop doing in order to stop coming here (and stop hurting your momma). But you also KNOW we like you to write a lot more about just one piece, and yet you haven't been able to do what you know. So show us some discipline and convince us that you can actually do what you know!

How Can I Be Successful?

I have always wanted to learn about how to be successful in life. I never had a job, but when I get out I will get one because I need to get money the right way instead of sellin' dope or weed. That's what I always wanted to learn about because nobody in my family that I know of never had a job. They always sold some type of drugs to get money.

I need to make money to buy me things and pay bills. Also to buy my little brother and sisters things so they can be happy. My dad in jail so he can't get us anything and I'm in jail, so I can't neither. I need to get out and get a job to buy people things also my dad. When he gets out I'm gonna talk to him and try to hook him up with a job because we need him.

-G Unit 4

From The Beat: First things first. Before being able to help your dad, you have to help yourself. That means finding a way to stay out of here as your first priority. We think you're on the right road to look for a legit. job. Of course, unless you finish school, most jobs you can get won't pay too much. So we hope your dad can be a dad and you can be free.

Missing My Family

Man, w'at's up with da Beat? Man, I really miss the fam bam. 'Cause I could be out with my big bra right now. Playing the game or with some girls right now. Man, I miss my fam.

-D Unit 4

From The Beat: We know you do. Next time you're out and tempted to do something that could lead you here, remember just how much you miss them.

I Have Always Wanted To Learn About...

I have taken a lot of things for granted like, being able to go to school. Back in the days my great-great-great-grandmother and father had to walk miles to go and learn something and sometimes they didn't even learn anything 'cause they had to get jobs to help the family.

I messed up and got put somewhere I didn't want to be when I could be at school learning something. I always wanted to learn to help people in any way I can. Not that I don't help people, but I want to do something with my life that will help not just myself and not just some people but the world. I want to learn something that would help me help the world.

-Marcus Unit 4

From The Beat: It's easy to take the sacrifices of those who went before us for granted. All you can do is promise yourself to act in a way that respects them and what they've done for all of us. In what ways do you want to help the world, which is in need of a lot of help. If you act as a positive role model for the young ones who look up to you, you will be changing the world!

God's Plan For Me

W'at God want with me? Would He want my heart? My body? Or he want me to learn in jail what life is, or to pay my life away for free.

-Cornelius Unit 4

From The Beat: We can't answer what God's plan is for you, but what we're interested in is what your plan for yourself is. Do you plan to hand over years of your life to a system that doesn't much care about you, or do you plan to make some changes that will put you back in control of your own life?

Disconnection

I know lots of people in the world that wants to help us change, like social workers, lawyers, public defenders and case managers. But to show us they want to help, they gotta put effort in that will at least make people know they want to help...

-Mk Unit 4

From The Beat: What kind of effort would it take to let people know their efforts are sincere? What do you have to do to help yourself change?

You Blew It

What have I taken for granted? I take a lot for granted. The judge gave me a chance to stay with my brother, and I messed that up and ended up in jail for some shhh. But it coo 'cause I'm going to make it up to him and my family that's watching me up there.

-Young Kut Unit 4

From The Beat: In what way do you plan to make it up to your family? When you "messed up" at your brother's, what did you think would happen? Did you think you could get away without consequences? Has this experience changed anything about your thinking?

You Blew It

When I was out, I could've stayed out. But instead, when I come home from my program, I thought I learned skills to stay away from the things that I got myself into before I got locked up. But I can't change, and after these years of my young life, I realize this is the life I'm going to live.

I'm going to go to another group home and knock that shhh out to get these people out my life. But when I come home, I know it's going to be the same thing. This is my life. I know I messed up in some ways, but all the shhh I done did in my life I ain't changing for no one.

I've done took a lot of stuff for granted, like my choice of coming back to the halls. But that's my choice I decided to ride with. If I get another opportunity to stay out of jail though, I'll take that. But going back home those chances are slim.

But I'm tired of this shhh over and over so for myself I going to do what I have to do to stay out. I'm not going to take this second chance for granted.

-Slim Looney Unit 4

From The Beat: You sound confused, SL. On the one hand, you seem committed to the life you've been living, the style that leads you to hand over your freedom to the system. But on the other hand, you say you're not going to take a second chance for granted. That suggests to us that you have some changes in mind. Can you tell what they are? If we're wrong about that — if you don't plan to change — what makes you think the system's response will change? If you do the things that lead you to jail, then you're choosing to go to jail. In other words, if you can't find a way to stop yourself from doing the things you know you should not be doing, the system will find a way to stop you, and you won't like the way they do it at all!

You Blew It...

Man, this time I really blew it 'cause I could have been at home right now but I want to be on da block. So I'm in here 'cause it's like when I was out it's like I wasn't even trippin' off nothing. But now I'm in here, it's like I'm trippin' of hella stuff. I blew it.

-D Unit 4

From The Beat: The question is, how can you keep yourself from blowing it when you get out of this situation? You wanted to be on the block, so you ended up being taken away from your home and your block.

I Blew It

I blew it because when I was out, I was not going to school every day. Now when I am in jail I got all A's. Now I know I can.

-Brian Unit 4

From The Beat: We couldn't read your last sentence, Brian. So, now that you know you can, are you

My Life

All my life I've been doing a lot of bad stuff, like getting in trouble at school and at home. I'm grounded most of the time at home. Sometimes my grandmother would talk to me about the way I act. She would tell me to behave myself and to do good in school and to listen to my mother. After she talked to me I would behave, but then like a couple of days later I would start to do it again.

Then one time my godfather had went to jail for like two, three months. When he got out, he had told me that he regretted the stuff he had did. He told me that if I don't straighten up...

Now I'm in here, and I too, regret what I did. But now when I get out tomorrow I'm going to put all of this behind me and look toward the future.

-Alx Unit 4

From The Beat: We admire your goal of putting your bad behavior behind you and starting anew. But how are you going to do it? What specific things do you plan to change in your life so that you can create a better future? What are you going to stop doing? What are you going to start doing?

You Blew It

What I have taken for granted is my freedom. Freedom to me is my family, girl, home, and street life. That's my freedom, ya dig, I take that for granted because I wasn't cherishing what I had. I wanted more so I pushed it to get more dough and ended back up in here.

I been thinking 'bout the family a lot, especially da wife. She been on a thug mind since I touched down in here, you feel me, but how I plan on getting that back is getting up out of here and doing my time, get off probation so I could do whatever I gotta do, you feel me.

But yeah, man, that's all ya boy got for ya today.

-JR F Baby Unit 4

From The Beat: How can you keep the love you have for your family and "wife" uppermost in your mind when you're out of here and not forced to think about them all the time? We're glad you plan to do your time and get off probation, but that's a goal, not a plan. What is your plan for achieving that goal? Will you go back to school? Stay off the block? Get a job? Wishing not to come back here is not enough. You have to make some important choices.

You Blew It

What's up with The Beat, man? It ya boy, GF Baby, and I took a lot of shhh for granted. For one, I took my freedom for granted. I miss being on the outs doing whatever I want to do.

I took being on the phone for granted. I used to just hang. I also took my family for granted. I wasn't spending that much time with them while I was out. I was always doing stuff with my ninjas and missing family functions. I missing hella stuff.

I even took these girls for granted. I used to be playing them, lying to them, standing them up, and just dogging them out period. I need to change but it's hard because I miss thuggin', hanging on the block, carrying on and just banging out. But I got to change because I can't keep coming back and forth. This jail stuff ain't for me. I'm stressing.

-G-Baby Unit 4

From The Beat: Of course it's hard to change, but as you know, it's hard to be away from your family and locked up, too. Those are really the difficult choices you now face — stop doing the things that lead to jail, or spend more of your life as someone else's slave. We hope you see that change is not something just to wish for, but to plan for. What's your plan?

What I Miss

W'a's up with The Beat? Dis yo' boy Hot Rod up here in the B4 thuggin' it. But what I miss the most is my mom and my girl.

Being in jail make me mad 'cause I always miss what I got on the outs. But when I'm out, I don't miss much 'cause I'm out with what I miss. I miss them late nights on the block with my goons when we used to be out there getting that money.

But I'ma try to make this my last time in the halls cause I wanna be out with what I miss, 'stead of missing it in here.

-Hot-Rod B4

From The Beat: As long as your focus is getting back to the block with your goons to get "that money," the chances that this is your last time to be locked up are small. Apparently, you haven't made the connection yet between that focus and the fact that you are here. Maybe, as you move out of childhood and into adulthood, you'll see that coming here or staying free depends solely on the choices you make.

School Of The Streets

When you do shhh, you don't have no one telling you what to do, what to watch out for. So then you learn on the streets. So it's like the streets become your everything. So when you do some dumb shhh, you just end up here. But now I see if someone says something to you, you still going to do it. Can't no one stop you from doing what you going to do, so I said, "Forget it."

-Chago Unit 4

From The Beat: We're not sure we understand what you've written. If you end up here when you do "dumb shhh," then what do you mean "no one" can stop you? You're stopped right now! And, if you don't stop yourself from doing those bad things when you're out, you'll just be stopped again by the system, each time longer than the last time. "Forget it" seems like exactly the wrong advice to follow.

I Have Always Wanted To Learn About...

I have always wanted to learn about playing basketball. When I was little and I learned a little bit, my homies taught me how to play. That's why they're my homies. I always play with them.

I was raised in the ghetto. I didn't I didn't really have a mom. My mom was a gang banger too, but that's why she did not have a lot of time for me. I don't know how it feel to have mom.

But anyways I let you guys go. It's time to go. So a'right then, I want to say a shout out to my homies.

-Felipe Unit 4

From The Beat: We are very sorry that you grew up without the woman who gave birth to you functioning as your mother. Her job was to raise you, to protect you, to guide and educate you, but she decided that her own selfish interests were more important than yours. (We don't mean to unload on your mom, but we want you to know that you are not to blame for having no one guide you through your young years.) Growing up this way, does it make you want to be a better father when the time comes than your mother has been to you? What would make you a good father?

Do I Believe In Love At First Sight?

Yes, I'm a victim of love at first sight
I saw this guy, he was the pretty boy type
He looked so good, I just wanted to take a bite!
I met this guy in school
But the first time I saw him, it was in jail
In the beginning, our relationship was kinda good
But now it's like a living hell
It's good but then it's bad
One minute I'm happy, the next second I'm sad
It's so confusing 'cause he takes me to Paradise
Then he kicks me in the ass
I don't know how long it's gone last
But I still believe that he was my love at first sight
And I still think I wanna be his wife...

-Paradise GU

From The Beat: A victim of "love at first sight"... Yeah, well put. Besides the "first sight" part of your love, it's the rest of the relationship that sounds familiar to us. All relationships require both parties to compromise, to give up some things, and to work on the issues that cause problems. We think that being "his wife" is a way to keep you from exploring your own potential. Before you do him, do you!

I Hate Being Locked Up

Man, I being locked because I have to ask to do things I normally do on my own when I'm out. I really can't wait until I get out. I been locked up for four months now, and the whole time I been here I been working on my plan, so whenever I get out I can stay out of here.

The first thing I go to do when I get out is go to school. But I know it's hard to change because we like doing bad things. But I'm gone try.

-Lg Unit 4

From The Beat: How can you hold onto the memory of this place enough on the outs to keep you from doing the things that you know will land you right back in the box? Yes, it's hard to change, but it becomes harder with every passing day that you put it off. Each time you lose your freedom, it gets harder to retrieve it, and harder to keep it. We strongly encourage you to find another way, LG. You are very smart, but that is not enough if you don't put those brains to good use for your future. Going to school is a wonderful place to begin. Good luck!

Another Sad Story

I met this girl name Melissa, and when I first met her it was like Chris just hit earth! I was so anxious to get to know her so bad. So time went on, and I did get to know her better. Next thing you know, we started goin' out behind our friends, hiding it because we didn't know how to show it, or we were just scared to let it be known and shown.

So when we were together, we would be like two peas in a pod, but in front of our friends we would act like we wouldn't now each other, like two strangers. But Chris would always make Melissa smile, laugh or say, "Think your funny, huh," And I would say, "I know I am funny, Baby." Then at least I know I had a lovely time with her.

The reason I'm writing this passage is because I'm locked up and I miss you like I never missed nobody, Mami mia, and its not because you got pregnant. It's because I love you, Baby, and maybe in the future we can get together. Who knows? I leave it in God's hands, and like I always said, I will be the last one laughing and standing with pain when I hear or see you with another man but me, and that's Chris. So who's funny now, huh? What you think, that I got too much pride to write a passage about a girl that I love so much?

-Lil' C B4

From The Beat: This is a little confusing to us because you say that you might get together with this girl. But if she got pregnant, then obviously you have already gotten together with her. So what happened after that to make you wonder if the two of you will hook up or not? Is she going to have your baby? Are you going to be a father to your child? What does that mean to you?

I Have Always Wanted To Learn About...

I have always wanted to learn about life
I have always wanted to learn about change
I have always wanted to learn about getting along...
But I guess those topics are above my knowledge.

-Mk Unit 4

From The Beat: You learn about life by living it (and reading about it). You learn about change by making it (and observing it in others). You learn about getting along by doing it. (The Beat would like you to choose just one topic to write about, not all three. We're more interested in a more detailed and thought-out piece about one subject than three short pieces that don't reveal all that much about you.)

Preventing Something From Happening

Well, actually I haven't tried to stop anything. I like to start things. I don't know, that's just me (Kamay). I like to finish them too. I start fights, arguments, a whole lot of stuff.

Oh, actually I have tried to prevent something — my friend from getting her heart broke by her mate. Because he had a baby on her and she didn't know. I told her and she didn't wanna listen to me. Then when she found out she was mad, hot, wanted to kill him. So she called me and told me how she found out, and she was crying and everything. So I called him and told him how he hurt her. He said he didn't mean to. I said how he could've told her. He said he didn't wanna hurt her. And from what I know they broke up.

-Kamay GU

From The Beat: So you managed to break up this couple that shouldn't have been a couple from the start. We guess you can call that an accomplishment, but it's not quite on the same level as preventing a crime, for example. But at least it's a real piece, fully fleshed out with details. For that we're grateful.

Why More Prisons Than Schools?

I have always wanted to learn about... how society works and how there are more prisons than schools, also being how jail is big business, my education to exceed to the next level and now about America today. How young black males got caught up in the system. And knowing dat the man is getting every penny as we speak.

-Harold Unit 4

From The Beat: How badly do you want to learn about these things? Many people have written books about exactly these subjects, some from personal experience and some from research. But you have to find those books and read them. The best way to do that is in school. So, even if there are more prisons than schools, did you take advantage of the school you were supposed to go to? Will you when you get out?

How Does The System Work?

I always wanted to learn about how this shhh work in here because it's like they be making up rules sometime. Another thing is the system, 'cause right about now I really need to learn the system.

- D-Boom Unit 4

From The Beat: What do you mean you need to learn the system? You're learning more than most people know. Unfortunately, you're learning it the hard way.

How Will 2007 Be Different From 2006?

I think 2007 will change really bad because there's going to be stronger weather; there's going to be violence going on. You really don't know what going to happen because anything could happen. There could be earthquakes, there could be fire, there could be anything going on in this world, and especially when there is a new year coming up.

There is violence everywhere you go, but the other thing I am worried about is me. Where am I going to be at? But I can't answer that because I do not know if I am getting out of YGC because I could really do some hard time up in here for what I did. But I got to be a man so I could stay out of YGC and stay home and enjoy 2007 because I messed up 2006. But I ain't going to mess up this time, because I'm smarter and ready for 2007, yaddamean.

-Burmer B4

From The Beat: 2006 wasn't a very good year for us, either. So we're looking forward to 2007. Maybe what you learned from messing up the last year will keep you from messing up this one!

Friday

The reason I pick a topic called Friday because I get out of juvy. When I get out I am going to spend time with my family and my homies. The most time I am going to spend with is my big cousin. Me and him we like brothers.

I glad that I am getting out before the holidays. I also have to go to my lil' cousins birthday party. He is turning three. Thank God I'm getting out Friday

-Young C Unit 4

From The Beat: Congratulations on your recent freedom! Now comes the hard part: holding onto it!

Love

I have experienced love at first sight. I fell in love with Mary Jane. It just touched my brain and heart. This happened outside my auntie's house. Just watching my cousin pass her around. It lasted but not for long. But she leaves and comes back whenever I want. My body reacted kind of funny the first time, but then it felt good.

-Chicano B4

From The Beat: Has your love affair with Mary Jane always been good for you? Love shouldn't land your ass in jail, so maybe you should re-evaluate this relationship...

RIP Wax

RIP to Wax. I love you. Wax, things is not the same. You know I'm in YGC. My dad is at home; my mom is good. I just don't listen to no one. I love you. RIP to Wax.

-Dennis Unit 3

From The Beat: If Wax was able to come and talk to you just for one last time, would you listen to him? Did he have more wisdom than your mom and dad? Please don't put them in the position of having to miss you...

Little Bit of Nothing

Well, I don't really know what to say 'cause there is nothing in my mind except doing my time. But actually, I am going to say, "Hi. My name is Charlie and I don't know what to say. Late.

-Mike B4

From The Beat: No, you really don't know what to say, do you? We had to take one line out of this short piece because it wasn't Beat appropriate. How 'bout telling us what changes you plan to make in your life in the new year.

What I Took For Granted

When I was out, I really didn't cherish phone calls as much as I do in here. I wasn't tripping off food as much. But when I got in here, I be hungry as hell. I miss my family a lot and my thugs and can't wait to get out.

-Darius Unit 4

From The Beat: If you are dying to get back to your "thugs," this will probably not be the last time you have to eat what the system serves you... Besides phone calls and decent food, what can you change on the outs that will prove you aren't taking your freedom for granted?

When I Look Into Your Eyes...

When I look into your eyes I see a lot of love. I'm looking to get out to look into your eyes, baby girl. Love, Fat Thug always.

-Fat T B5

From The Beat: You're looking to get out, and we're looking for you to stay out! We know you can get out, because we've seen you do it before. We're not so sure about staying out, though...

How Will 2007 Be Different From 2006

I'm not going to change. Next time I get out, I'm going to be slicker about the shhh I do. I try to stay away from the narcs so I won't get caught up and end up here again. I'm going back to doing things I used to do. I think being locked up this time made me think about the stupid shhh I was doing. I was slipping, but this time I'm going to get out and make my money, stack a couple of Gs and keep on bangin'. I'm going to stay out of jail.

-Nacho B5

From The Beat: We admire your honesty, Nacho. But here's the thing. You have the ability to change or not to change, as you choose. But the one thing we know for sure is that the system will NOT change. So, you can be as slick as you want, you'll end up being a slick sick slave for the system...

Learning About Computers

I want to learn how to make a computer and how you make a program that people would like and go on all the time and like.

-Brian Unit 4

From The Beat: This is something you can learn about, if you're serious. There are many classes and programs that teach about computers. How are you preparing yourself right now to take advantage of those classes and programs?

2007

The way 2007 will be different from 2006 is I'm gonna be taking care of my newborn son, and getting a job to support him. Another thing that's gonna be different is people, place, things and my thoughts. Even though I should've never had a kid, I think it's a good thing 'cause it might help me change my ways.

-Joker B4

From The Beat: Well, Joker, we certainly hope that having a kid will help you change your ways — for your kid's sake as well as for yours! But the fact that your so tentative — "might help me" — worries us, because when you have a child, your focus should shift from yourself to your child. We don't see that shift in this piece, so we don't have a lot of confidence that this huge change in your life will bring about a new way of looking at the world and at your own responsibilities, even though it should. We hope you prove us wrong!

I'm Gone Stay On Top

Some people call me a hero
Some people call me a zero
But you know
I am gone stay on top

-Michael Unit 3

From The Beat: We don't know where you are going to stay, Michael, but we hope where you are now is not an example of staying on top. Can you "stay on top" and still stay on the outs? If not, then maybe you'd better shoot for something lower than the top...

As I Get Older...

Three things that I took for granted was my mom, my grandma and the way people felt about me. But as I got older, I started to realize how much I needed to change and trip off who cared about me and who didn't. So now I am better at how I think and how I feel.

-Lil' Foot Unit 5

From The Beat: We're glad that your more mature thinking is making you feel better. What kind of changes do you foresee in your future, especially as you continue to mature?

Dat's W'at's Up!

I really don't know what to write, so to keep it real, I'm coming at you live and direct from YGC girls' Unit . It's been two months since I've been in here, but I've been holding it down. But yeah, it's that short lil' Mexican girl. I seem to be liked, and also to be cool, straight up. Naw! I'm just playing, but I'm out till next time, so one love. But remember, what goes around always comes back around! You feel it!! Bye-bye

-Lil' Young Unit 5
From The Beat: There's not much to this piece... You have nearly a full hour to write, so why take the easy (lazy) way out. Why not challenge yourself to write something that has the potential to teach something, to change something, to put new ideas into the air, to stir things up!

Love At First Sight

It was love at first sight. She was fine as hell. Her mama did her well.

I see it in her face.

Dang girl, what's yo' name?

I'm tryin' to get to know you and spit this game. They call me D-Stuzz. What's yo' number But I'm sorry to tell you that I'm married already to this girl name Myra. It was love at first sight. I just want you other girls to know that you can't have me. It happen at school and not with you, plus she was thick as hell and you wish it was you, but it's ok.

-Lil' M B4

From The Beat: So, you think all those girls who can't have you are crying because you're such a fine catch? And if you are already "married," why are you asking for other girls' numbers? Tell us something about Myra so we can understand what makes her so special to you.

Love at First Sight

Love at first for me was when I fell in love with money. At a young age I learned from my father to care for it. I learned its value. I learned its worth, to treat it with respect by holding on to it and organizing it. Now I can manage money good. I owe that to my father. And that's why I love money. I'm even nicknamed after it. Till we meet again, love to God and ask Him to wake you again.

-Dubb B5

From The Beat: We wish your father had taught you as much about caring for yourself, learning your own true value and worth, and treating yourself with respect as he did about caring for money. If you cared for yourself and could organize your own affairs the way you say you care for money, you wouldn't be here!

What I Had Taken For Granted

I have a lot of things starting by people not trusting me. Just like when I lied about being somewhere I wasn't supposed to be. I really was supposed to be at school getting an education, and then I got took away somewhere I didn't really want to be.

-Nadia Unit 5

From The Beat: By not going to school, you prevented yourself from getting one kind of education, but by coming here, you're getting another kind of education. What have you learned?

Great Advice

My friends give me good advice on stuff, like when I have sex, use a condom. The reason why you use condoms is because you don't want to catch AIDS.

-T-B Unit 3

From The Beat: Condoms not only protect you (and her) against AIDS, but all venereal diseases. They also prevent pregnancies which are not wanted — and, at your age and in your situation, every pregnancy should be unwanted... Your friends are wise to give you this advice and you are wise for taking it.

Not Yet

It didn't think I blew it yet, but I should get another chance. When I get out I'm gone to try not to come because I hate being locked up. When I'm in the room, it feel like the walls are closing on me.

-Young Money Unit 4

From The Beat: We can definitely relate to your feelings of claustrophobia when you're locked in your room. The question you will have to answer is: do you like doing the things on the outs that lead you to jail more than you hate being in jail? Or, do you hate jail more than you like those things? Your choice.

I've Taken School For Granted

I've taken school for granted these past three years. I've had the opportunities to have gone to any school I wanted to straight out of high school. But instead, I've taken my school for granted. I've slipped through classes not doing work I had to do. I'm being given a free education and I'm taking it for granted. Having the "I-don't-care-about-school" attitude. The bad part about it is I know what I am doing and why I am doing it.

-Marshaun

Lil' Black Boy

Lil' black boy
His pop's last joy
His mama's other man
The streets are smotherin'
And ain't nobody helping
Just breathin' being selfish
So the only thing he got
Is the ghetto and they blocks
Dealers with they rocks
He can feel them in his socks
Tried to go to school
But the feeling won't stop
Having hunger pains
Stomach still in a knot
Knowin' he can eat if he steal for the block
So pass him the heat
Let him pull it at the cops
Now he in the street with the pills and the rocks
Makin' easy money, putting his in a box
Got shot five times... he is in a box...
Never had a chance to
Grow and advance through
Certain circumstances
Feeling worthless and rancid
Stranded as a seed
Somewhere lost in the weeds
Somebody took his life for walking with thieves
But every now and then I hear him talking to me
Saying, "Lil' Black Boy, hold on..."

-Frank

#2

R-Reaching
O-Our
G-Goals
U-Using
E-Everything

-Frank



Sometime it gets hard, and I don't feel like doing it, but then I tell myself that I have a future to create and I have to deal with these teachers every day because nothing going to get solved by giving the teacher a hard time.

I Blew It

I took my parents for granted. I used them for personal stuff like money, clothes, shoes stuff like that. An I lost they trust because I lied to them and couldn't do the one thing they asked me. And I always talk back to them and don't listen to what they say.

I always think they was playin' when they say, "You keep messin' up in school and you ain't gone get nothin'." Den he keep sayin', "If you messin' up in school, I'ma take you out of Woodside wit' you' cousins, an' I just ignore him. And I'm always showin' how I hate dem when I don't get what I want.

But really, if som'in' happen to dem, I would really be mad. I just want everyone to know if you got parents, be grateful and respectful 'cause you never know when dey can go.

-Te babbu

I Blew It

One thing that I took for granted was my parents' trust. One day my parents let me and my brother and sister at home, and they thought that they can trust us and we weren't going to do nothing. But that was wrong. We had started to drink and smoke. Then when they were out some people told on us. So they caught people drunk and high and then we'd lost that trust. We got it back so now we ain't going to do it anymore.

-Jay Boy

You Blew It

A time when I took something for granted was when I kept telling ma dad that I needed money for something, when really I just wanted some money to have it in my pocket. The time I got caught was when I needed to buy a dress for my homecoming dance. So then when he gave me the money, I made the decision not to go to the dance anyway. I used the money he gave me to buy a new outfit.

After the fact I was trickin' my dad, I felt kinda bad because he works hard to get some money to support me and ma mom. I felt like cryin' because he seemed mad and disappointed in me. I tried to say I'm sorry, but it didn't seem to help that much. I still feel bad 'til this day. When I get older I hope to be able to pay him back.

-Dat Bay Chick

RIP Daddy

I took my dad for granted and now he gone. First, I took my dad for granted when I first was born. My dad was the one that I love, but I felt I did not give him the time of day. I was so fast to ask for some money. I was always there to be the first one out of me and my brother to say, "Dad ain't never here."

Second, I feel that I did not say much to my dad. If I would have said some of them to my dad... he will still be here. My dad was a good dad, but I did not give him time to let us talk. I cry every night thinkin' that one day God will let him come back so that I can just say good-bye...

Third, I think that my dad is/was good no matter if we had our ups and our downs. I feel about my dad that no matter how much you hate a ninja's guts and blood, that is still your dad. RIP Daddy.

-Muffin

Me

I love hanging wit' my frien's talking on the phone, going to parties and just being me. Everything has always been given to me. If I wanted some new shoes, I got it. If I wanted to go hang out at the teenage club, there was no doubt that I was going.

But as I become older, everything is starting to change. I been going to a college prep school for two years, so yes, that means I am a sophomore. And boy, has my life changed! Everything is so different. My friends have changed. My surroundings are different too.

I go to school from 8 to 5 every day, and have to maintain C and above. I try my best, but I'm always so busy and never have any time to do anything else. Yes, I want to go to college, but at the same time it's just too much and everyone wants me to succeed in life and stay at this school and go to college. I just feel that it's too much pressure. I feel that if I mess up then everyone will be disappointed.

But living out here make you wanna leave all yo' friends getting killed over dumb turf stuff. I love my East Palo Alto, but I wanna get out and be someone and do something with my life.

-Brianna

I Blew It

I took money for granted because once I start getting money all the time I start wanting it more just to buy shoes and clothes. Yes, it was freedom because I got to get whatever I wanted and whenever.

My family was just giving me money and was telling me to save it, but I was always spending it because there was something I saw and I had to have it, so I bought it. It's my mom, grandma, and brothers who give me money all the time just for the fun of it. I think this all happened at home. The only problem is tell them to stop giving me so much money at one time.

-Wynessa

Encouraging Or Discouraging Change

My teacher's class is so hard to pass at my school, Woodside. For example, I go to school every day to all my class and it feel like the days is getting harder to pass. They knew I live in East Palo Alto and they assume I'm a troublemaker. That's so hurtful because they assume I'm not going to pass their class. They don't say it to your face, but I can see it in their faces and personally they lying to you every day.

And every day I prove them wrong by doing my homework every night. Sometime it gets hard, and I don't feel like doing it, but then I tell myself that I have a future to create and I have to deal with these teachers every day because nothing going to get solved by giving the teacher a hard time. So what I do is do what I have to do in their class and get out their faces.

When the day end, I know that I won and the good always outweigh the bad. So I keep that I mind every day.

-Niece

Rollin'

Rollin' on the block
Jus' tryin' to get my yapper
My hustlin' never stop
I'm in a scraper
Makin' paper
Smashin' windows
I'm lookin' through cars, boy
Now I'm locked up
Lookin' through the fence
In they yard, boy
I'm tryin' hard, boy
But they caught me slippin'
Leavin' evidence, man
I'm dumb, man
I'm trippin'
I was goin' dummy up
On the outs, cutty
Now I'm feelin' dummy
'Cause I ain't rollin'
In my Cutty

-Junior

From The Beat: Do you call yourself a dummy for rolling on the block, doing whatever that's illegal, getting arrested and going to juvy, or because you messed up and got caught rolling on the block, etc? It sounds like you don't intend to stop your rollin' and are going to risk your freedom, education, your family's peace of mind and anything else you value on the outs. If we're right, you'll be just setting yourself up again, so you might just as well stay in juvy and save yourself and everyone else the paperwork and the trouble of going through the cycle with you again. Come on, Junior. What else can you do besides hustle to get some cash?

Dude, I Don't Know

Hello, everyone. Greetings. Aloha. I don't know what to write about, but I have always wanted to learn about how people's minds work and their personalities and shhh. 'Cause I'm just used to others people asking me questions and doing tests on me and shhh. Chales, but I really do.

-Shy Z

From The Beat: Trying to peek into other people's minds and learning to understand their emotions can be fascinating, Shy Z, especially because everyone is continually changing. What have you already learned about people? What about yourself? When you examine your own mind, have you discovered anything about yourself that surprised you? Did those tests you've been taking tell you anything about yourself that was accurate, that you didn't already know? If so, what?

Drugs Give Heart Attacks

Don't do drugs
Or use them
They will kill you
Just you watch and see
Drugs don't give a damn
They make people money
Funny
That you act like that
Drugs don't give hugs
They give heart attacks

-Forgot To Sign

From The Beat: Nice poem! Drugs are cold and heartless, you're right. You sound like you're writing from personal experience about what drugs can do to you. What do you do with your wisdom? Do you leave drugs alone when you're on the outs? We hope so!

I Want Life To Be Pristine

I'm livin' up
To my one last dream
Stayin' clean
And serene
All I want is for life
To be pristine
My shhh is clean
Like a mouthful of Listerine
Everyone's got their doubts for me
Girl, please
This life's got me free

-Tripper

From The Beat: Do you mean that messing up and going to juvy is too messy for your pristine life? Well, that's good news! You're right not to let anyone else's doubts about you slow you down, but sometimes others can have insights into our character and good advice that can aid and enhance our goals and dreams.

My Year In Placement

The difference between this year and next year will be--I'll be in placement. It gon' hell suck, 'cause I'm going to have to spend a whole year there.

-Lil' Gatita

From The Beat: While it may be really painful and scary to be away from home, Lil' Gatita, being in placement may not have to be miserable for you. Often times group homes are in the country which can be gorgeous and peaceful—with woods, streams, mountains, wild animals, etc. Placement can also give you a time out and get you away from the daily drama of being a teenager and show you that there's always another life possible for you, including making new friends. Whatever exposes you to the outside world can be exhilarating and give you a new sense of security and independence.

Wrongly Convicted

Getting done wrong by the judge
I flash a frown, to let her know
I ain't playing around
This is the third time
I'm about to break down
It's going to be a long week
I'm makin' plans
For when I hit the streets
On my last twenty-four hours
Desperately need a shower
Tomorrow the trial
One more chance with the judge
I really hope this week
She dropped the grudge

-Forgot To Sign

From The Beat: Do you really think you're going to trial because a judge has a grudge against you? Come on! We strongly suggest you do not flash at the judge, even if she has made a mistake. She's got a lot of control over your life right now. Do you think you should also examine very carefully what happened that brought you into juvy? Take a good look at yourself, before you continue blaming other for your poor choices. What is your plan to better your life?

2007

I turn eighteen in the first day of '07, so I will never come back to the hall. I will also have my diploma by December 20, 2006, and I am going to COM (College Of Marin) in January, so I am set.

-Mic

From The Beat: Excellent! Way to go! It sounds like you're outgrowing whatever has been bringing you into juvy. Good for you for setting up going to college while you're still incarcerated, so you can hit the ground running as soon as you're released. You know we wish you the best of luck!

I Would Probably Rewind

When I got wrapped, my mom said, "I warned you"
Now, every day, I gotta wear orange and blue
If I had one wish, I would probably rewind
Instead of walk with my hand behind my back, in a straight line
Now I know how serious it is, breaking the laws
But now I gotta walk around in some other ninja's draws
My uncle said, "Life's a witch," and now I feel him
Now I'm starting to feel like Tookie Williams

-Coke

From The Beat: Good poem! Being in juvy for messing up is one thing, but feeling like Tookie Williams is totally another trip. What is it about Tookie that you identify with? Tookie was convicted of killing four people and was executed last year. On the other hand, from his cell on death row in San Quentin, he tried hard to get kids to stay out of gangs and wrote children's books, which won him a lot of respect. But if there's any lesson to learn from Tookie's life, wouldn't it be to stop yourself now, before your life of anything illegal gets really heavy, so weighty that you can't stop its plunging?

I Need To Learn To Stay Out Of Trouble

I have always wanted to learn about how to stay out of trouble, to keep my nose clean, to be free.

-Forgot To Sign

From The Beat: Your freedom is only yours to lose. Is what you need to learn—to stop doing whatever it is you're up to—to stay out of trouble? Can you do it?

I'm Scared Of Smoking Again

I'm scared! I'm graduating high school really soon and right now school is the only good thing in life that's really keeping me together. I mean, don't get me wrong—I'm finally out of school, but I'm worried I'm going to start smoking again. I really can't risk messing up. Hopefully I do good at least for another six months, 'cause then I'm eighteen and I can do whatever the hell I want to.

-Gemini

From The Beat: You don't say what you smoke, but whatever it is, it must be scaring you. How are you doing in juvy without it to smoke? Do you want to set yourself up with a program now to help you when you're on the outs again? If so, can you talk to a counselor and/or your parents now, so you'll get the help you need?

What's Up, Beat?

I'm so sick of coming back to this place. It's my seventh time. I really think this is going to be my last time here. I'm 17 now. In six months I'll be 18. I need to stop messing up, 'cause pretty soon it will be jail. I graduate high school in two weeks! As soon as I get out, which is tomorrow, 12/7/06, I'm going to sign up classes at the College of Marin. I want to be a nurse in pediatrics to help others. Also, get a part time job so I can stay busy and not get into trouble. To every one locked up--Happy New Years!

-Gemini

From The Beat: With your super goals in mind, maybe they will distract you from getting into any more mess and get you loving learning about how bodies are put together and work, etc. You'll be a wonderful nurse and your young patients will be lucky to have you!

I Blew It

I blew it. The reason I say that I blew it is because I got caught up for some stupid ass shhh. I stabbed a vato. What led to this was because the other vato had said some words that I didn't like to my homeboy and I got in it for him.

It start out when my homeboy and some other vato were fighting, then the other vato said to my homeboy, "You..." Just because for some words the other vato had said, I shanked him and now I'm doing time up in the Marin County Juvenile Hall. I've been in here for practically a month already. I talked to my PO awhile ago and he told me that he was going to give me one more chance, and if I mess up one more time, I'm probably going to get sent to CYA, or something like that. But hopefully I get out soon.

-Oscar

From The Beat: Oscar, regardless of what your PO says or what happens to you legally, stabbing someone for any reason isn't "stupid ass shhh," it can be an attack that can cause your victim's death. You don't seem to be taking your stabbing him seriously. What have you learned from all this? Keep living a life that puts you in such situations and you can kiss your freedom goodbye. Wake up!

This Year I Almost Died From Drinking And Drugs

How will 2007 be different? I will not be locked up, hopefully. I might be in placement. So if I am not, I will be doing good, like not on drugs or getting in trouble. I will be more respected to my parents and nice. I will maybe be going to a placement, because I might want to go to a rehab so I can change. See, this year I just almost died from drinking and drugs.

-Jeremiah

From The Beat: If you've made up your mind to go to a rehab, it might really be able to help you, Jeremiah. While you're in juvy, why don't you talk to your counselor and set it up? It's smart to ask for and get help when you need it!

Time

Time is precious
Time is money
Get paid if you broke
If you got chips
Get richer
Not broker

-Jamal

From The Beat: If time is precious, how do you account for all the time you're spending in juvy for whatever brought you in there? Do you think your time in juvy is just dead time in your young life? Or are you spending your time in there in a productive way? Since it sounds like you intend to go right back to "getting paid," once you're free gain, do you mean "get richer" by doing whatever brought you into juvy again? If so, why do you think you'll stay free if you do?

Might Be A Miracle

It might be a miracle that I got released. Not now, today, but January 18th. Get out, do good, stack chips and live right. In a rap group now and talkin' to Sic Wit' It (E-40's label) and Thizzent (Mac Dre's old label.) We gave them our CD and waiting for a response.

-Henny

From The Beat: You're right, Henny, that maybe the gods of the universe are smiling down on you to get you released. If that happens, we hope your gratitude sustains you, once you're free again, and you remember to stay out of any mess! We'd love to hear your CD. We can't wait to hear what means so much to you that you write raps about it. When you write raps, why not let us get a taste of your work?

Kickback Gone Bad!

One day me and my sisters were drinking and they started play fighting. Then my sister punched my other sister in her mouth and she had braces, so she got mad and got serious, so I got in between and said, "Stop!" and my sister grabbed a can opener and split my forehead and I went to the hospital.

-Shy Z

From The Beat: Wow! You've got a lot of courage, Shy Z, to wade into all that. It can be frightening to see how play fighting can escalate into a family war. If mess among your sisters jumps off again, how will you handle it—similarly or differently?

When I Look Into Your Eyes

Today, during drama, while I was lookin' in your eyes while you were tellin' me yo' story about your friend, I really felt your pain, because I know that feeling when you lose a friend or a family member.

Lookin' in yo' eyes I see sadness, because I know yo' life ain't quite complete yet and yo' need a ninja like me to lighten yo' life up. Just stay sweet and yo'self.

-James

From The Beat: Whoever you wrote this to sounds like they would like to have a friend. It's wonderful of you to offer.

I Do Kind Of Like This Girl I Saw

Do I believe in love at right sight? Yeah, I do believe on that shhh. I hate shhh, because one day I saw this fine ass girl. Her name was Michele, so we ended up together for at least one month, then we broke up and I kind of do like her. For all my homes.

-Lil' Smokey

From The Beat: If she's still in your heart, maybe you can write her from juvy and/or call her when you get out. Maybe she's still liking you, too! Wouldn't that be nice?

Somethin' Really Nice

When I look into your eyes
I see happiness
I see love
I see that I love you
Somethin' really nice

-Catracho

From The Beat: If you see happiness and love when you look into this person's eyes when s/he is with you, most likely you inspired it, Catracho. But such intimacy can make his person really vulnerable to you, too, so maybe be careful with his/her heart.

Them Eyes

When I look into your eyes, it's like you're touching me in all the right places. I love you but I haven't told you. I see it in your eyes that you love me, too. We've talked about it and feel the same thing, but we're just waiting for the right time to say it. The only time we've had was the phone and at school. I'm waiting for the weekend, but it doesn't look like I'm going home.

-Forgot To Sign

From The Beat: Do you think that sometimes it's just better to let a relationship develop without talking about it? To just let it breathe and grow?

I See Pain

When I look into your eyes
I see pain
Since I've told you a lot of lies
I've made myself go insane
I don't really want to stop
Doing what I do
But I'll do anything
For you

-Oscar

From The Beat: Well, the evidence may be in, Oscar, since you see pain in her/his eyes, that you've caused it. If this person tells you to please stop whatever you're doing and also to stop lying about it, will you stop?

If I Ruled The World

I would give money to all the poor people and give them homes, and I would make smoking cigarettes illegal, and our world would be a gay place. He he.

-Shy Z

From The Beat: Great start for creating a more beautiful, kind, generous world for everyone to live in, Shy Z. Would you design the world to be a gay place in the sense of joyous, or that everyone would be homosexual? Why don't you elaborate on the world you wish you could produce? Give The Beat details! Start with today!

That Shady Game

When Jayleon (that's me) approach a girl, I wear stunnas and lie to the girls about whatever, so they can't look in my eyes.

-Jayleon

From The Beat: Doesn't sound good. What are you hiding? Why lie? What do you get when you lie to a girl? Why disrespect her and yourself like that/this? If you feel so little towards her, why don't you just leave her alone? 2007 should be the year of being honest to yourself!

I'm A Treat 'Em Right

Yes I believe that there is love at first sight! Because it's this one girl I know, and when I first seen her I felt like it was love and I knew I had to introduce myself. And even though I hear so much about what she been doin', I know I can't believe it, because I didn't see it and I don't believe what I hear. I can't say if it lasted, because I haven't got out to witness how it felt with her. Well, that person know who they is and I want them to know I'm a treat 'em right at all times.

-James

From The Beat: It's fun to read what you've gone through when you first fall in love, James. Well, you aren't shy. You're right not to believe what people say about her or anybody, especially when people can be so evil when they're jealous. You seem to think for yourself, so that's all good.

Life

Life a itch and then you die
When I broke my wrist
I damn near wanted to cry
I seen the white light
Then I came back to earth
And prayin' to the Lord
I don't get hurt

-Cookie

From The Beat: Nice poem! It sounds like you were in an accident of some kind that could have been life threatening, but luckily you came out with just a broken wrist. Do you often put yourself in dangerous situations? If so, why? What is worth risking your safety and/or life?

Stop Smoking

One time there was this guy that was a really good homie of mine, that always tell me to stop smoking. I love to smoke in the streets of Los Angeles. He always would get mad at me, 'cause he would want me to stop, but I didn't.

-Lenjo

From The Beat: Even though you love to smoke, something must be telling you your homie is right that you shouldn't smoke, or you wouldn't still have his advice in your mind, don't you think? In your heart do you think that smoking weed or worse is seriously hurting your health? Or sabotaging your freedom? Whatever, now that you can't smoke anything because you're in juvy, can you also stop smoking at all, once you're on the outs?

Mis Pensamientos

Siento que te he conocido en alguna parte que he ido, pero a lo mejor es un error porque pienso que somos mucho en el mundo y casi nos parecemos. Somos de carne y huesos y todos cometemos errores.

Gracias a Dios todo ha salido muy bien. Como quisiera recorrer todo el mundo porque quisiera conocer todos los paices.

From The Beat: Todos nos podemos parecer, pero debajo de la piel somos diferente. Cada quien tiene diferente forma de pensar y actuar. ¿Como son tus formas? Esperamos que algún día llegues a conocer los paices que puedas. Todo se puede en esta vida siempre y cuando tú lo desees.

My Thoughts

I feel like I have known you in some part I have gone to, but more than likely it is an error because I think that we're a lot in the world and we barely show ourselves. We're made up of meat and bones and we all make mistakes.

Thanks to God, everything has come out very good. Oh how I would like to travel the whole world because I would like to get to know all the countries.

-Erivan, Santa Cruz
From The Beat: We can all look the same, but under the skin, we're different. Each individual has a different way of thinking and acting. What are your ways? We hope that someday, you get to know the countries that you can. Everything is possible and can always be done in this life when you long for it.

Un Cambio

Cambiar para mí sería en la manera de manejar mi vida con más comportamiento, respeto y responsabilidad.

También sería tener un mejor futuro y por supuesto tratar que siempre de esquivar las drogas.

Creo que en eso no tengo mucho que cambiar por gracias a Dios. No tengo vicios que de drogas.

Me parece que el 2006-2007 será diferente en muchas cosas. Pues hay que enfrentar nuevas metas.

También hay que experimentar nuevas cosas. Para mí sera esa la diferencia y talvez otras cosas que no puedo escribir.

From The Beat: Todos pasamos por la etapa en el cual tenemos que hacer un cambio bien grande. Y creemos que llego el tiempo en el cual tienes que hacer tu propios cambios. ¿Cuales son las metas que tienes pensado enfrentar? Deberías de tomar este tiempo para pensar en estas metas. Y tengas cuidado de estas cosas que no puedes escribir...

A Change

For me, change would be changing the way I lead my life with better behavior, respect, and responsibility.

It would also be having a better future and of course, always trying to leave drugs alone.

I believe that in regards to that, I don't have much to change. Thanks to God, I don't have any drug habits. It appears to me that 2006-2007 will be different in many ways. Well, one has to confront new goals. Also, one has to experiment new things. For me, that will be the difference and maybe other things that I cannot write about.

-Marvin B4, SF/YGC
From The Beat: We all go through the stage in which we have to make a big change in ourselves and we believe that the time has come in which you have to make your own changes. What are the goals you have in mind completing? You should take the time that you're doing behind bars to think about these goals. And be careful of those things you can't write about...

Por Mi Barrio

Hey que ondas, soy Soldado escribiendo de nuevo. Pues vamos a hablar un poco del amor ya que aqui no tenemos amor ni compasión. Pues yo creo que el amor a primera visto si existe, pero nunca me ha pasado a mí.

Cuando empecé andar con mi novia, no la tomaba en serio, pero con el tiempo la empecé a querer bastante. Cuando estaba afuera no la supe valorar porque andaba con otras rucas. Cuando caí preso, me di cuenta que verdaderamente la quería. Ahora que quiero salir de aquí no puedo porque me metí en muchos problemas.

Lo único que quiero es que ella sea feliz y que haga su vida porque no sé cuando vaya a salir. Aunque saliera no sirviera de nada porque voy a regresar a mi bloque, me voy a seguir metiendo en problemas y voy a seguir cayendo preso. Es todo lo que puedo decir.

From The Beat: Tienes un buen corazón y lo pudimos observar en la manera como le deseas lo mejor a esa persona que tú quieres. Hay gente que estando preso, quieren retener a sus novias con caritas de amor. Esas personas salen y despues hacen lo mismo y las que quedan llorando son las novias. Pero al cambio tú, tú sabes que ella seguira sufriendo contigo y les desea lo mejor. En la otra mano, estas muy equivocado en la manera como estas viviendo tu vida. Estas dejando la vida por un barrio que te mete en problem, que te esta quitando tu libertad, que te esta apartando y te ha apartado de las personas que tú quieres. Dinos solo una cosa, ¿qué te ha dado el barrio que sea más importante que tu familia, tu novia y tu libertad? Danos una respuesta que sea justa. ¿Puedes?

For My 'Hood

Hey, what's up? I'm "Soldier", writing once again. Well, we're going to talk a little bit about love since in here we don't have love or compassion. Well, I believe that love at first sight does exist, but it has never happened to me.

When I started going out with my girlfriend, I didn't take our relationship seriously, but with time, I started to love her a whole lot. When I was on the outs, I didn't know to value her because I was messing around with other females. When I got locked up, I realized that I truly loved her. Now that I want to get out of here, I can't because I got myself into many problems.

The only thing that I want is for her to be happy and make something of herself because I don't know when I am going to get out. Even if I did get out, it wouldn't do me any good because I am going to go back to my block, I'm going to continue getting myself in problems, and I am going to continue finding myself behind bars. That's all I can say.

-Cruz, LCRS
From The Beat: You have a good heart and we know this by the way you want the best for the person you love. There are people that, while they're locked up, want to hold on to their girlfriends with love letters. Those people get out and then they end up doing the same thing, and the ones who are left crying, are the girlfriends. However, you're not like the rest because you know that she will continue to suffer with you, so you wish her the best. On the other hand, you're deeply mistaken in the way you are living your life. You're leaving your life for a 'hood that gets you into problems, that is taking away your freedom, and that is separating, and has separated you from the people that you love. Just tell us one thing: What has the 'hood given you that is more important than your family, your girlfriend, and your freedom? Give us a response that justifies your actions. Can you?

Lo Que Extraño

Extraño a mi familia y a mi carro

Mi novia y mi hija,

Extraño a mi bloque

Extraño a mi música de los ochentas

Extraño la comida de afuera

Extraño mi ropa, mi celular y mis zapatos

Extraño cuando iba a bailar con mi novia

Extraño el cine

Extraño a mi cama

Extraño a mi casa

Extraño la comida de mi mama

Extraño a mi trabajo

Extraño mi libertad

Extraño todo lo de afuera

Extraño mi libertad

Solo le pido a Dios que me de una oportunidad
Y volver a ver la luz del día.

From The Beat: ¿Entonces que esperas para recuperar las cosas que extrañas? Si estas en esta situación es porque tú así lo has decidido. ¿Qué es lo que tienes que hacer para recuperar lo tuyo?

What I Miss

I miss my family and my car

My girlfriend and my daughter

I miss my block

I miss my music from the '80's

I miss the food from the outs

I miss my clothes, my cellular, and my shoes

I miss going out to go dance with my girlfriend

I miss going to the movie theaters

I miss my bed

I miss my home

I miss my mother's cooking

I miss my job

I miss my freedom

I miss everything from the outs

I miss my freedom

I just beg God that He gives me another opportunity
And be able to see the light of day again.

-Laye
From The Beat: So what are you waiting for to regain the things that you miss? If you are in this situation, it's because you decided for things to be this way. What is it that you have to do in order to regain what's yours?

Como Será El Año 2007

Que onda soy Tazmania de El Salvador. Yo creo que el otro año va a estar gobernando y controlando los cinco países, EL Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, Mexico y los Estados Unidos.

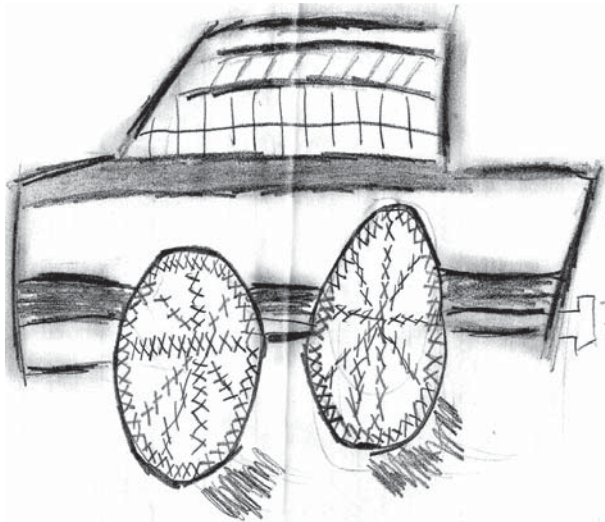
From The Beat: ¿Gobernando qué?

How The Year 2007 Will Be

What's up? I'm Tazmania from El Salvador. I believe that the next year is going to be governed and controlled by the five countries: El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, Mexico, and the United States.

-Orlando, Marin
From The Beat: Governing what?





¡Soy Latino Y Que!

Que ondas compas? Pues aqui aguitado estoy en mi cuarto, porque una señora que trabaja en las mañanas me dio una hora sin saber porque y me borro mi nombre de la lista y no puedo trabajar.

Saben compas? Es duro estar aqui porque soy Latino. Me quieren tratar como basura. ¿Pero que puedo hacer? Nada! Aunque tú le expliques, ellos siempre tratan de sacar una excusa, pero a mí me vale madre. Voy a hacer 100 por ciento Latino por vida. Hasta la otra.

From The Beat: ¿Por qué crees que te dieron una hora? ¿Que hicistes mal? A lo mejor hicistes algo no debido y te dieron el castigo que te merecias. ¿Que crees que fue? Es verdad, el orgullo de ser lo que eres nadie te lo puede quitar. ¿Si eres tan orgulloso de lo que eres, porque no buscas la manera en demostrar que los Latinos pueden salir adelante, y evitar de empañar la forma como la gente ven a los Latinos por los errores que estan cometiendo?

I'm Latin And What!

What's up, bros'? Well, as for me, I'm here in my room feeling very down because a lady that works in the mornings gave me an hour without knowing why and she erased my name from the list and I cannot work.

You know what, bros'? It's hard being in here because I am Latino. They want to treat me like garbage, but what can I do? Nothing! Even if you explain to these people how you feel, they always try to come up with an excuse, but I don't give a damn. I am going to be 100% Latino for life. Until next time.

-Laey

From The Beat: Why do you think they gave you an hour? What did you do wrong? Maybe you did something that you should not have done and they gave you the punishment that you deserved. What do you think was the motive? It's true; no one can take away from you the joy that comes from being what you are. If you are so proud of what you are, why don't you look for the way to show society that Latinos can come out ahead and avoid tarnishing the way people view Latinos through the errors that they are committing?

Esos Ojos

Cuando Miro En Tus Ojos
A veces miro odio y tristeza
Y a veces miro unos ojos que brilla de alegría
Dispuesta a hacer lo que sea por
Regalar tu amor a esta persona.

From The Beat: ¿Quien le da la tristeza y odio a esta persona? ¿Eres tú?

Those Eyes

When I look into your eyes
Sometimes I see hate and sadness
And sometimes I see some eyes that shine with happiness
Ready and willing to do whatever
To give your love to this person.

-Maniac, San Mateo

From The Beat: Who brings sadness and hate to this person? Is it you?

Me Enamore De Alguién No Debido

Yo una vez me enamoré de mi prima cuando la vi por primera vez. Nunca la había visto porque ella vivía en Estados Unidos y yo en El Salvador.

From The Beat: Sabías que eso es incorrecto! No es bueno enamorarse de los miembros familiares. Va contra la moral, la religion y muchas cosas más.

I Fell In Love With Someone I Shouldn't Have

I once fell in love with my cousin when I first laid eyes on her. I had never seen her before because she lived in the United States and I in El Salvador.

-Jose, Marin

From The Beat: Did you know that that was incorrect! It's not good to fall in love with one's own family members? It's goes against standard morals, religion, and many other things.

Una Vez Me Enamoré

Una vez me enamoré de una chica que solo me rompio el corazón. Fue porque no supe apreciar su amor y me dejo. Despues me di cuenta que Jonny andaba con ella.

From The Beat: Entonces tú le rompistes el corazón a ella, no ella a ti. ¿Que esperabas que te aguantara todo lo que le has hecho?

One Time, I Fell In Love

One time, I fell in love with a girl that just ended up breaking my heart. This happened because I did not know how to appreciate her love and she left me. Then, I found out that Johnny was going out with her.

-Anonymous, Marin

From The Beat: So you broke her heart, not the other way around. What made you think that she would put up with all the things you did to her?

They want to treat me like garbage,
but what can I do? Nothing!

Amor A Primera Vista

Yo tuve una novia y creo que no fue amor a primera vista, porque terminamos luego. Creo que no era la chava que de verdad quería.

Ahora estoy saliendo con mi novia y pienso que la amo.

From The Beat: ¿Y estas cuidando a la mujer que piensas que amas? ¿Como?

Love At First Sight

I had a girlfriend and I believe that it was not love at first sight because we eventually ended up breaking up. I believe that she was not the female that I truly loved.

Now I am going out with my girlfriend and I think I love her.

-Orlando, Marin

From The Beat: And are you taking care of the woman that you think you love? How?

La Independencia

La independencia para mí es no depender de nadie. Vivir solo, tener que trabajar para mí mismo, comprame la ropa con mi dinero, y vivir sin tener que pedirle a nadie.

From The Beat: ¿Has experimentado la independencia? ¿Alguna vez has trabajado duro para obtener lo que te gusta?

Independence

Independence for me is, not having to depend on no one. Living on your own, having to work for myself, buy my clothes with my own money, and live without having to ask anyone for anything.

-JV, Marin

From The Beat: Have you experienced "independence?" Have you ever worked hard to obtain what you liked?

SHAKA Writing to a colleague of ours that we truly miss for she's no longer with us, Shaka hits us with two powerful poems. The first one is short but speaks volumes... It projects the horrific idea that jail is so depriving it can release you a whole different person than when you went in. And in his second poem he points many things out that are wrong with the world we live in. He projects their projection with his own perspective and we think he has a really thoughtful outlook on life. He's writing from the California Correctional Institution in Tehachapi, CA. We await more of his ideas with much anticipation and hopefully we'll hear from him soon.

Who Will It Be?

A tear, a smile, it all seem the same,
In this place where loneliness, is synonymous with pain.
I look deep within and strive to remain strong,
In the abyss of hell, a place that's for now home.
And even tho' I am sure that one day I will be set free,
I wonder when that happens will it really be me.

Life Projected

Impressionable mind, fancy dictates,
Following footsteps, embracing race hate,
Educational strives, political lies,
These agents of decadence, embedded in mind,
Captured opportunity. Look at what they do to me,
This-spirited souls, defected ingenuity.
Nuclear agendas, digital divide,
Many tears fall, but I don't cry.
Contemplate, wonderment, how is it so?
That glow upon this earth, is not a halo.
We foster in our dreams, achieve by any means.
Intelligent as who? Then why so much stupidity?
Better thrive the way that ants do, delve in nature's
harmony.
Thoughts of life projected,
For this is what they do to me!

I learned I must live up to my capabilities, and no matter if they say I will never get out that does not mean that I stop loving living and trying to be better at being me.

THEE MOUSEMAN Our beloved OG is back on the scene with a vengeance... We've missed him for a little while but nonetheless it's nice to hear from him. This week he hits us with a piece titled, "Dear Lil' Folks," where he really comes at the younger generation in a real way. He pulls no punches as he gets straight to the point with a saying he's learned. 'Accept a loss and do not try to turn it into a victory.' He even tells how he learned that saying and it really is a beautiful story about someone determined to teach. We love hearing that here at The Beat because that's why we publish your pieces. We feel like we are the greatest teachers of what we've been through because we experienced it first hand. He's writing from Pleasant Valley State Prison in Coalinga, CA, and we really appreciate all of his lessons. Thank you Mouseman we look forward to hearing from you again in the near future. Oh, did we say this man is one hell of an artist too. Thanks for everything of friend!

Dear Lil' Folks

How y'all doing? I was just sitting here thinking, "Man it has been a while since I dropped a line to the lil' folks." So here is the line and a few to go with it. What has been on the brain lately is parole board, oh yeah it is that time of year, do not get it twisted, I am not going any place! And I am well aware of that, I will spend the rest of my natural life in a cage every night till death comes for me!

Anyhow back to the brain, so I was thinking about a phrase I dig the shhh out of, that being, "accept a loss and do not try to turn it into a victory." Wow, simply that means, you got your ass kicked, live with it! And learn from it. Well I threw the last part in. Like I said, I know I am going to die here. But that does not mean I quit living, quit trying to be better that guy called Mouseman. I think if I accept the loss of my freedom, I will be able to concentrate on doing other things that in the long run will be of service to my family. After all I do consider my self a grown man does not ask for himself, ask for the sake of those he accepted as his family. Again do not get it twisted, if I had the chance to get a parole date, see ya! Out-tro! Just like you lil' folks. But we are here right, and it does not look like anyone in "Tighty Whities" is coming to rescue us from this dumb ass joke we done played on ourselves! Hate it when that happens! True that?

Oh' yeah, the brain, so this saying, I figure it rescued me, cause there I was one fine day wondering about what was happening in my life, and realized it was not going all that well. I had just earned a trip to a tougher prison. (Not a good choice) and I was thinking, "Bad Move Mouseman" but as in chess the move had been made. Y'all know the rule "Touch And Go," well I touched and I was way on my way! But once the door slammed I knew I made a bad, very bad choice.

Wish all I want the clock moves forward nonetheless, (<Fancy word for the day!) so now what, I was sitting in the hole and just passing time. And here comes some square pushing a cart with books on it. The teacher, imagine that I

thought, in the hole they want me to go to school too.

So this cat says, "School Books?" I said, "Damn..." he smiled at me and said, "stay stupid then" and walked on down the tier. I remember thinking about that guy and what he said. I thought I would kick his ass if I got me hands on him, I killed him a few times in my mind, I think I might have even killed his pet goldfish! Who the hell did he think he was!

But this cat got under my skin, everyday he would walk by and say the same thing, "school books," my reply, "Damn..." It got so normal a few times I would say Damn... Before he even asked, he would just laugh and walk down the tier. One day he stopped at the cell and instead of asking about the books he said, "why?" "why what" I asked, he said, "why won't you go to school," he thought for a moment and said, "what happens if you go to school?", I said, "if I break it down, then they win." He said real quick, "I will be back tomorrow, but how do they win if you get an education? And he split leaving me to think about that for a day.

So, there I was, and here I am. I thought about a reply, I came up with some pretty good ones too. But in the end the answers I had did not hold too much water, if any at all.

The next day he came by and again said, "I got to run but, if you wish think about this — accept a loss and do not try to turn it into a victory." That is some heavy stuff when you think about it and break it down. Apply it with reason and a fair amount of actually wanting a future for yourself. Some of us (like me) have the ability of twisting stuff, hell I can make Santa Claus look like a cheater if I try.

This cat gave me two days to come up with the answers to fix my own act. He gave me two days to figure out I needed a change in my own life. He did not try to push nothin' down my throat. He gave me two days to give myself a life.

I believe I started this by telling you I was going to parole board soon... sometimes at parole board they say, "you are not doing anything to merit being placed in society" then they tell you try harder, do this and do that and then still they will not let you go.

So that is a loss, and I will not jump through all these hoops just to be told I will not be allowed to go home. I accept that loss and will not try to turn it into a victory. But I have learned from it. I learned I must live up to my capabilities, and no matter if they say I will never get out that does not mean that I stop loving living and trying to be better at being me. Twist nothing lil' folks, I would love to be free. I do not have that option at this time. But do not take a saying and twist it to fit your lack of education, twist it to fix your future needs.

Lots of kids now days like that saying "can't stop, won't stop", hell that's a good saying, unless your applying it to some school yard mentality where, you are just concerned with how you look to others. Better stop, better take a good look! By the way, you going to school? Why not?

Thoughts

... A glass of knowledge is served, chilled with a twist of prosperity and perseverance. And as such is consumed, the mind is under the influence of wisdom, self reliance and over-standing...

Honestly speaking, I am confused, not of ones becoming, but of spirituality. One minute I want to say forget it and give up, then the next it's the realization that the cards I've been dealt is all I have to work with. And my struggle is to change and/or alter the outcome. On a continuous basis I beat myself up mentally for unbeknownst reasons. Who am I? Why am I here? What purpose does it serve to worship a god that inflicts tribulation and suffering on his parishioners? I shun the fact that I can't comprehend nor grasp true happiness, but I lack the feeling of depression. So what would I be categorized as?

Rain falls against my window sill and as I stare out unto freedom, I wonder is there another that suffer as I? I yearn for family support but none is given, and my mind projects negativity every time the thought surpasses my conscience. Abandoned and forgotten. Déjà vu is what I call it. Yeah, been there, done that. When my mother was snatched from me, no one on neither, my maternal or paternal side, came to me and my brothers rescue. So we were subjected to endure foster care.

I found a home with one foster mom for a period of eleven and a half years. I even grew accustomed to referring to her as mom, because to me she was that. I still stay in contact and her family still adopts me as a member. I actually loved being there but soon after my brother started cutting up behavior wise, and was sent away. I found myself urging to rebel. Once my brother and I were spilt up I seeked refuge with the streets and it's many occupants. Subsequently adapted to its poisonous lifestyle. Forcing my foster mom to let me go as well. From then on life was all bad. For a brief moment of absence I was allowed back, but by then my rebellious ways were untamable.

So I was placed back into the system. When I hit Mrs. Walker's group home, immediately I hated it and opted to run away. After confiding in my longtime social worker/friend, I decided to go to another foster home, ran by this lady name Mrs. Simpson. It was alright but she forced me to be independent when I still didn't understand childhood dependency. At first it was just me, her and a cat named Fuzzy. I enjoyed the fact of having a television in my room. Playing with her nephew that was the same age as myself.

All hell broke loose when Albert moved in. Because for one we had to share the same bed which I really wasn't feeling. Plus all the attention first distributed to me was now going to him. (I know, jealousy at it's purest form.) You see, when it was just me and Kenyon (her nephew) got spoiled by her. She took us to Laughlin Nevada and spent hundreds on entertaining us. Albert came and no more spoiling. Ultimately me and Albert had a fight. Then she turned on me and asked my social worker to remove me from her home and kept Albert.

After that I ended up in Boystown, which was one of the best group homes ever. We had three boys homes and two girls homes. All on the same cul de sac set deep in Trabuco Canyon Orange County. I stayed in this house with Joe and Cynthia Guterrez, and I adopted them as parents because they really cared for me. We did everything together. We ate out, rode numerous bike trails. Even drove all the way to San Francisco. Then things changed because Cynthia missed being home in Texas. So Joe and Cynthia along with their miniature pincher packed up and headed south. Leaving Boystown administration to separate and divide up The Guterrez House.

I ended up going to the house next door which was Mr. and Mrs. Brown. They were cool. They too had a dog named

EDWARD ATKINS In his series of 'Thoughts' which we've dispersed over the last three issues, he gives us his fourth chapter (the next and last one will come next week), where he's in and out of group homes, makes many incredible realizations, and even gets romantically involved with someone. As he tells his story he humanizes his situation by explaining things we all could have gone through if those were the cards we were dealt. He deals with them in his own way but he inspires us to go through whatever we're going through with a level head. This week we have a great Beat Without section and this next writer is a big reason why. He's writing from Pelican Bay State Prison in Crescent City, CA. Be on the lookout for him next week as we'll publish the final chapter in the 'thoughts' series.

Otis. Everything was going good until I hooked up with this girl in the group home across the street named Monique. We hit it off instantly and things were really heating up between us. Although I was in the 7th grade and she was in the 10th.

One day I decided to sneak over to their house. Even though there were sensors on the windows I managed not to alert anyone. I went over to the room window and she allowed me in. We kissed and fondled a little bit and then I hurried back before they found out.

That night I plotted with my roommate and another. We all snuck out of my room window, broke across the street and was up in my girls room. Things were fine until their staff started knocking on their door trying to see what all the fuss was about. All of us boys hid until the staff left. Then I kissed my girl goodbye and we struck back across the street. Little did we know the mom and dad of the other girls home saw us and reported it to administration.

We were all called to be reviewed at the Boystown Office in Irvine. Once there everyone blamed me as the mastermind. Even my girl and I was kicked out of Boystown and shipped to Erickson Center in Van Nuys.

Now that's a placement. It was 40 of us in a semi dorm setting and they had three girls homes. There it was crazy because the school was on grounds. We had a football field, cafeteria. We even had a real school bus. There is when I reunited with my brother and boy did we reap havoc. We started our own crew called "No Respect." Because we were all younger than every one else that was there. We grew to be 7 deep, girls were a commodity for us as well. But at the time I was the only one with a sweetheart to claim. Yeah, her name Sara and together we were a match and inseparable.

I actually liked her but she wasn't trying to further our relationship, if you catch my drift. So I cheated on her then left her to be with this other girl named Maria. Now she was with the business. We ended up getting caught in the raunchy act in the bathroom of my room. Because the staff (my case manager named Kim) saw her sneak in with me. Now that was embarrassing.

Halloween '96 marked my ninth month at Erickson Center and we had a Halloween Party. Sara started dating my brother in attempt to stay close to me, and that caused me and my brother to fall out behind it. Because he really liked Sara but she didn't like him. Me and Sara got back together briefly and she gave in to my wants. But right after we broke up, due to her leaving and I got with Wendy. But I ended up getting kicked out and catching a case that got me informal probation.

After that I ended up in another group home called Casa Mirabal Inc in Sylmar. It was cool but unracially balanced, so I felt out of place being I was the only black. I ended up beating up one of the twin brothers that was there, and effed around and got put in a mental hospital. Because I unleashed all of my anger upon him and wouldn't let up. I stayed there for almost two months before my social worker found me.

After Casa Mirabal Inc. me and my social worker were headed straight to Compton... Life is an adventure that can never be duplicated. So enjoy it as it comes because who knows when the adventure shall end.

Life is an adventure that can never be duplicated. So enjoy it as it comes because who knows when the adventure shall end.

TERRY LYTLE Writing from the Lanesboro Correctional Institution in Polkton, North Carolina, we give you a writer everyone should know by now. Like most of our Beat Without stars he has the ability to give lessons without giving lessons. Let us explain... He doesn't boldly come out and say, "You need to do this, or you need to do that..." as often as most people trying to 'help' would. Instead he shares an important piece of him and lets you know how the situation turned out for him and you can either take it or leave it. Experiences are the best lessons because you can't argue with what someone experiences because it's neither right or wrong, it just is... This week he tells us a little bit about his background and the role his parents played in his life, especially reuniting with his father after twenty years. It's a great story that'll have you on the edge of your seats, so beware the power of Terry's pen...

Untitled

Before I was even in kindergarten, I was going back and forth between mom and dad's. I see my parents fight, heard cussing, and arguing, seen them drink and do drugs and get back together so many times, I couldn't count 'em all if I tried. To also have my "grandma" who really is just my mom's foster mom, owning a big bar/lounge in the city of Phoenix, AZ - well, you can assume correctly that me and my sisters were there a lot. My mom was a bartender at grandma's lounge; the lounge was after school daycare. but I got to go live with my dad.

Then, my parents got together again-only to separate one last time. I started the first grade after that summer, where, my dad helped my mom and us get settled in our own house (dad got an apartment) this is what I remember, what I didn't tell you is that I was already doing crime, I was stealing — shoplifting out of stores too. I don't have no excuse — we were not rich but it wasn't rough either.

My mom got remarried around Christmas and we moved to the state of Georgia. I never seen my dad before I left, me and my sisters didn't even know we were leaving out of state! In GA, I did get in trouble sometimes but never with the police. I got accused one time in school of stealing something, I didn't because I had something similar to what was stolen. To this day I never got an apology, even when the item was found later on, crammed up in the persons desk (real messy desk) who supposedly got the thing stolen. I still resent it, but it barely gets remembered. This was in the second grade. Also while I was in the second grade, my cousin by marriage did sexual things to me and had me do things to her. She was 14 or 15 a woman to me. I didn't really understand at the time but it was always being sneaky, so I knew what she was showing me was wrong. Besides she said I couldn't ever tell.

All of a sudden we moved to North Carolina. I grew up seeing my older sister run away over and over. My mom got divorced, married again, divorced again, and a lot of party time at my house. Drinking, pot smoking, and I was running around with a crowd. We were little hoodlums mad at the world, not one of us, with a dad at home. I couldn't begin to tell you all the times I heard negative words about my dad or how many times I was told, "you're just like your dad!" like it was so terrible. I was growing pot in my moms house and backyard, smoking reefer with her, drinking with her, going to illegal bars with her and her friends, having sex with her friends and a lot of other criminal behaviors on my own or with my friends that she knew about too. All by age fourteen! Why wasn't this so terrible?

I've ended up in jail numerous times, I write this in prison for the 7th time. When I got out of prison (from the 6th time) I flew to Arizona to see my dad for the first time in 20 years. I visited for three days, he has his 50th birthday (I was fixing to turn 27.) I had been out of prison almost a year and the last 10 in and out of prison!

During those three days, I learned a lot. Like the real reason my dad and mom separated for good. Dad was clean and mom wanted to keep smoking pot. Also my dad has more years clean time, than I had been gone! And the reason we didn't have no contact was because my mom didn't let him know our whereabouts for the first four or five years! (I remember when this took place)

My point is: I changed some from those three days. I lost a lot of hatred and bitterness. I had no right for a lot of resentments and a lot of anger turned into forgiveness. I eventually moved back to AZ, got married, because I still didn't know how to handle all the emotional situations I started experiencing as I started a life free from my drinking and drug addictions. I didn't know how to make my marriage problems work. My lady had her fair share of reefer too and she was now "cold-turkey," sober, and pregnant! Double emotional turmoil. We separated. She came back to NC; two weeks later I came.

Today, I realize that even though I honestly missed her (of

course I am still loving her) I was dependent on her, like she was my excuse not to get high, I just wanted us to be a family, for our marriage to work, for our baby to be born healthy. I mean try to see it, we were a couple the first time at age 15! We've been through so many obstacles. Forgiveness is what allowed us to try again but she had some reservations when I came to NC to get her. She went confused soul searching for clues and answers, I went cocaine, crime-spree crazy for a week. 53 months, active!

Now I'm in prison, 11 months to go (God willing) and I am like my dad "just like my dad," as my mom said. I'm 30 months clean! I've even quit cigarettes and coffee! And just like my dad at this age in his life, I'm missing my child's life today even with my write ups (disciplinary charges) and anger management problems (nobody likes a smart-mouth racist) I continue to change my attitude. As I learned to accept people and things, more, this place (prison) affects me less. I truly wanted to change for me because today (and the last 1,000+ days) I want to be a dad (and maybe, hopefully) a loving trusting understanding and forgiving husband. But I was no good to my wife and child until I decided I was through for myself. I had to accept that it may very well be over between me and my lady and I had to come to terms with that! The first year, I was using while locked up! I put it into practice, while still being locked up. Yes, I still lose control, but I am convinced it is just my ego wanting his same prison "rep." but I wonder how many can honestly admit that their ego is ruled by more fear than anything else? I do but keep it to myself (hostile environments, bring aggressive reactions, and actions)

I write this for me, it helps to write out our past. The more we look at it I've learned the advice is true: the better we get and the easier it is to accept, live and go forward.

I also wrote it with the youth of Beat Within in my thoughts, those young "turks" yes if it's Gods will your lady will be there when you through foolin', it takes a lot of love and forgiveness, but you got it. God built you that way. Those little ladies, yes your man, if it's Gods will to keep him breathing yes he'll eventually realize you're his queen and the child, his princess or prince. I kept it clean not to say it wasn't that bad, but hoping you wouldn't have to read how bad it will and does get, if you don't let the people where you are at help you now. It is very humbling to go through the same problem and be thirty years young. The difference is the environment — face it now is the chance. Because no sugar coating shhh from me; once you are in DOC (Department Of Corrections) you're basically on your own. The Beat is one of the few blessings I have. You guys (and girls) are a constant, consistent inspiration. Believe it! You've got grown men in NC prison crying with you! Men — not just one. And that's The Beat (ing) Within (you).

Untitled

Days way from the age of 31

What is there to say life's lessons are tough ones
Sure, I can "cry" and moan and give plenty of excuse
But then the message would be lost, I'm helping me by
trying to reach out to the youth,

Beat readers, listen up

I pass my issue around to some of my "little mans" (in here)

They reading and feeling they hurt, too
Your writings are making fans down here

There's grown men, cryin' in here

All teared up, drying with anxiety's fear

That they won't get to see their kids

Tell 'em why they did just what they did

Most wanted the youth just to know, God didn't build us
this way.

Yes, we know — "dad it's easy to say 'sorry'"

But where were you when I needed to grow?"

Sorry to answer, little lady, little man

It's the same question a lot of us had.

Life is a cycle and we know the streets is rough

To us, the shame for making yours extra tough

But not trying is the same as suicide

'Cause, life is alive, with many positive options to choose

Son... Daughter... don't use 'dad' as the excuse

Grow beyond the pain and saddened abuse

'Cause dad's did the same — and we in prison writing
about the blues.

E'ry Time (Visiting Room Romance)

E'ry time she looks into my eyes
I energize the ties that tie her to my side
And I hypnotize her mind
With the love that hides behind my eyes
I find it hard to lie
To the lady who had my baby and ain't no shady grady wit'
my gravy
Ridin' like a 'Cedes through the hard times and time
I stay doing
Leavin' wit' a smile on her face she say she stay movin'
Flashbacks don't last and scratch don't stay crusin'
Losin' touch wit' those I love
I'm outta sight and outta mind
'till they say I'm out the pen and once again get on my
grind
I've read the writing on the wall
I've seen the signs and seen 'em fall
Still, I stay above it all with godly words when I call
Accusations and allegations
I do not hold with playa hating
So I will not hate on what I'm makin'
A relationship in understanding, I humble myself reduce
my snakin'
I can't judge or criticize if I'm wantin' more than just her
thighs
To connect with my wife for the rest of my life
I got to be a guiding light
I got to be here to ease her fears
And lend an ear when she sheds her tears
'Cause my woman's more than rear
Breasts and sex, lets get it clear
She's the jewel I'm holding dear, e'ry time
She looks into my eyes

E'ry time she looks into my eyes
I realize my reason for doing right ain't hard to find
Tempus fugit, losing weeks, I see how time can fly
I'm seeing how these other cons is prone to woof and lie
Callin' home on a phone that's runnin' up a bill
Need to take a pill
'Cause thoughts can kill when your imaginin' the worse
And denyin' how you feel
Fear manips distrust and lust has got you askin'
For the motivation and inspiration that be backin' all her
actions
A fraction of fiction tickin' in your thoughts
'Cause you yourself know you could never handle all her
loss
Or pay the cost of loving a con stuck behind a wall
But this is what I duck so it comes as no surprise
That we fallin' back in love e'ry time she look into my eyes
I remind of days and nights of joys and smiles and pride
Is simply swallowed like a bottle of poison dye
That stains the soul
She reminds me that I'm not alone and have a golden goal
A thing for which I ride
And I see it e'ry time, she looks into my eyes.

RAY SANCHEZ JR.

A Beat Without section wouldn't be complete without having this next writer's name in it. Everyone that reads Ray Sanchez's pieces enjoys them because we've never heard one bad thing said about him. This week he hits us with a letter and a poem. The letter speaks about how some people out here are worse off than him because they create their own jails in their minds. They look for happiness in all the wrong places when it's really in themselves all along. And he says he found out while in there, a place where if you're looking for happiness outside yourself, you probably won't find it. He closes with a poem to his baby's mother about looking into her eyes during visiting. He sees many things in her eyes and lets us know what they are and why it's more special than what most people have. He's writing from Pleasant Valley State Prison in Coalinga, CA, if you don't already know and we're sure you'll be waiting for more after reading this...

To Whom It May Concern

I wanted to write a piece on charity and kindness. I researched certain Bible scriptures and verse from the Holy Qur'an. I had deep interpretations all planned out I wanted to inspire all those locked up and then as I was writing all my Christmas letters, a yearly tradition for me, to all my friends, family, and loved ones I realized something many people on the street are worse off than me. They are imprisoned in cells of their own makin', cells far more deprivating than any the state could build because we custom build them with our fears, ignorance and hate, worse we never see our own prisons.

So I write this piece for those who are spiritually on lockdown in hope they can find the joy I contain in my being.

I read once that it's hard to find happiness in yourself and impossible to find it in anything else. Luckily I'm one of those people who have found happiness within and so can enjoy life regardless of my surroundings. I have very little but am quite rich in the love of my family. And as long as I have their love and support my spirit will not break, although I can feel it bend to amazing degrees at times and I will not despair.

In my poverty I have discovered the many micro treasures that pepper my life. It could always be worse. I could have no possibility of parole be actively gang banging and be in constant danger. I could be badly hurt, unwanted, forgotten dead or many other things so I am blessed. I unfortunately have no gift to give you other than the message of hope. Forget religion for a second, it doesn't matter if you're Christian, Muslim or Atheist, the concept of hope supersedes religious belief and it is because of this one simple fact: it is the nature of man to strive for a happier more fulfilling life. And it is hope that drives us to do so. I am a testament to this. Look at me! I am doing twenty-four years to life for a crime I did no commit and I am happier now more at peace than I ever had been on the street and if I can find such contentment inside these prison walls, cant you find it outside of them.

Appreciate. Recognize the many blessings that surround you. Thrive in your freedom! Hope for a better life drives me and it is that determined driving force I wish to impact on you. That is my message. I am sorry I cannot offer you more, but it is all I have and I freely give it to you. I pray you understand and do not take for granted the life you are privileged to have

Take care, folks. May you and yours have a merry Christmas an revel in the love of family and friends.

BUDIE

With a return address to the Washington Corrections Center in Shelton, Washington, this next writer sends a short letter letting everyone know that the penitentiary ain't where it's at. We see a lot of pieces discouraging youngsters from doing what they're doing to land them in places like the halls, group homes, drug rehabs, and things of that nature, because eventually they'll be hitting the penitentiary and everyone knows nobody wants to be there. So thank all you Beat writers for not only keeping it real with us, but also with our readers.

In my poverty I have discovered the many micro treasures that pepper my life. It could always be worse.

What's Up?

I'm here in Washington State Pen. So I know what it's like to be locked up. Away from your family and loved ones. I grew up in and out of juvie. I see all these older dudes around me and I'm not trying to waste my life away.

I have two strikes and can't catch a third. I've been in a gang since I was 11 years old. I'm only 25 now, but I'm finally realizing the hood ain't where it's at. You need to open your eyes and see how many gang members you see out there with houses, cars, or anything. You need to get your education. I hope you realize it before it's too late. For the ones that it's already too late, keep your head up, I'll pray for you all.

ALEX SHELTON We're starting the new year off with a bang as we have many knockout BWO veterans in this issue. This next writer is one of those people's names you here lingering around the office every now and then. And if you read on, you'll see it's for good reason. He paints a picture for all to see without judging anyone else's painting and at the same time lets those who are to come after him know that they might want to reconsider the picture their trying to paint because it could falter and you may not get what you wish for. This week he hits us with a very encouraging letter and three 'straight from the heart' poems that we're sure you'll enjoy. He speaks about everything from 'retiring' from the gang lifestyle to looking back on his life in retrospect questioning why his string of luck seemed to always put him in predicaments. He's writing from Kern Valley State Prison in Delano, CA, and he has many lessons to give, so we'll shut up for now and let him take the floor...

Greetings With A Smile

All staff at The Beat Within. Everyone there is doing a swell job and many God bless The Beat Within!

I'm here extending my utmost 100% bona fide love and respect and to let you know I received The Beat Within mag. - I highly appreciate this!! Also there's some excellent writers from the hall and prison. I really enjoy this project a lot, may we all see the light and learn from one another as we all "strive for betterment!" without a doubt I myself... believe that if any man or woman "plants that seed" to really want to "overcome" the dead-end street, as I have to give up the idea that it's cool to do drugs or drink then here's a dose of realism: the ball is real, so do you want to have a life of fun and ease? Imagine a loved one who died calling out to you here right now... to change your life... would you find it hard to respond to the real balance between the two-a close minded gangster fanaticism or a free-minded person living a clean life! Satan is no respecter of age or status... think how fragile life really is. Its reason enough to get serious, "Right now."

In Retirement

Ironically could a single word better describe why I'm in retirement...

In the crazy compulsive gangster mind everyone is just one turn of the cards,

One spin of the wheel or one roll of the dice away from a dream world,

Enticed by a fantasy.

Equals catastrophe

But now I'm calmed

Not ready to be embalmed! Maggots and worms

Posted up hungry

I was leery — who's the best? The east, the north, the south, or is it the west?

Al Capone days are over

I must admit a crafty brilliantly apt metaphor

RIP

The truth is priceless

But I'm still alive, not lifeless

I will continue to write poems if this is what it takes in being direct in saying

Without negative staining

With this Beat Within incredible circulation we are

All gaining will your young conditioned mind ever see the truth

Will you be bounced from one prison to another

From one lesson to another

Volume to volume of confrontational behavior and then boomeranging back

Finding that you can't land 'cause you are uncontrollable

Landing on the wrong parallel, are you really

Stable? The gang is crash landing hell bound

Round and round

To the detriment of collision

One that could have been avoided completely

Loopholes to stay armed? Are you conquerable?

Do you know what you can expect in the coming months and years.

No fears?

Perhaps fascinated by and attracted to this risk involved, climbing the loose rope

You don't have to be ensnared by the kind of false hope

There is a way out

That's what my poem is all about

The bottom line is that any and all forms of mob life corrode our character

To one extent or another causing an identity crisis

That's how the knife slices

I made a concerted effort for myself for my life

Welcome to the end of tolerance

What better words to describe my retirement

A new development

A final chapter

I Was Just A Young Man

I searched so hard to find myself in the eyes of people who didn't even know themselves:

These were close friends but none were a mentor

Looking down to the floor, no smile

But all the while... I had no good start bound to fail?

Oh well I guess there was no need to wail

"I was just a young man"

I would wonder why my life ended up the way it was

Was it because? I prayed to God

In the Pod, not knowing what my future would foretell

As I woke up to the bell

"I was just a young man" in the hall

I had plans to go kick it at either the park, my

girlfriend's house, or the mall...

That really hit hard with me because I thought "I've

wanted to talk about" doing better it inspired me

Yet inspiration with no motivation is like a dream you

can't remember

This was in October... November... or was it

December? It been so long

I was led away by the wrong

Like a misguided sheep with no Shepard

Or a wild leopard

And then along came the gang thing, this road with

no detours looks easier and it's the biggest downfall

any man or woman on the face of the U.S.A. here is

I'm sure I wasn't alone in all this

There is a time and place for everything, the devil's

recipe for condemn

A funeral "shouldn't" have to be one of them

No comment?...

With respect I deliver the message real and frequent

My Photographic Memory

There can't be a more gripping "title" written by me

In a cliché shorthand as I continue to zoom skyward

And as I click my memory forward

Never stepping backward when it comes time to tell youngsters

What "better" is without this

So hold that snake hiss

It's very difficult because some people are not quite sure what they are doing wrong

Even if they believe it's the right all along

Like a sad song, forgetting it all smoking on a bong

In the harshest light of my photographic memory I can

visualize cry for cry

The homies 'hi' and 'bye' the lie

Its time to examine why

Warriors are hated by so many people over the last decade

Because they kill without remorse including their own people

The system is going to fade

This leads to this conclusion:

My photographic memory can conduct an assessment of this political stir

Of homeboy's blood pouring out like a broken faucet

Some strong lost it

Dead

My photographic memory painted red

Some hate on me for coming on the scene and changing the game

And making people look at both sides of the gang issue

Bullets may not miss you

I don't have no good memories, I can't think of any

I don't have a perfect brainiac slot, only equal voice to

youngsters banging

Whom mainstream society ignores

Hating in scores

My photographic memory is of violence and gangsters

holding guns and knives

Homies laying in caskets

Can you really hear me like they say you can?

Do they really know man

Did you ask for forgiveness for your sin?

So you can enter his kingdom and have peace within?

To say the least

Another bad photographic moment of Satan the beast!

WHITEHEAD

Watch out... a new lyricist is on the prowl and he makes words convene with the best of them. The title alone suggests he's had a hard life, "Born Not To Make It But I Did," and is looking to triumph in the end. He also sends us a letter that inquires about getting Beats sent to him. To ensure you get a Beat we would need to hear from you. That's the best way to go about getting a Beat. And we appreciate you not trying to 'derail us with gang talk' because we're here as a platform for you to teach without passing judgment onto a particular group of people. Young people in our workshops mostly read this publication, and right now they're sponges to people who's struggle they can understand. So, keep that in mind when writing a piece you want published. He's writing from Calipatria State Prison in Calipatria, CA, and we hope we gave him enough information to keep him in contact.

Dear Beat Within

I've come across your information, and decided to write as well as receive your pamphlets. So do I have to write every time to get one or am I a member for writing and inquiring? I also have enclosed a short poem I would appreciate introduced in whatever catalog y'all decide. I'm really in need of some outside influential help that can guide as well as acknowledge this ambitious individual you have before you today. There is no limit to limit me. I've accepted and appreciate that gift, that uniqueness now.

I remember when I use to let situations, more so jail in general, battle me. But me being a warrior on a journey I'm going to eventually find my way (and so now the real journey begins.)

I didn't derail you with no gang talk, so I can be fully heard and fully understood. Man I'm born and raised in this life, hell promised, so I don't excuse the fact that I sound old like a boss when I'm merely 22, a young executive, I got an old soul like "Betty Wright: no pain no gain" and that be my life story.

As of now I'm currently in Calipatrias ASU (Ad-Seg) I've been here 365+ for allegedly "battery on peace officer," so you know I'm up against it all. I would really appreciate and love y'all assistance in any information of any source who helps publish non-scripted books and poems 'cause I'm on a mission and that's honest. No matter how much they throw at me I'm gone always keep my head up and slanted 'cause I'm a real one and they hate that... y'all keep up the positive, inspirational, good work y'all make the days easy in this man made hell... I'm gone.

Born Not To Make It But I Did

I came into the world with a pipe dream
Never allowed sunshine
Only know what nights mean
Uh' headache and empty stomach
Is what night's bring
Steel metal and a cold heart
Is the only way to get nice things
Until blue and red lights are seen...
Started early for the green - shackled early in my teens
Hell is where my life leads
Unless jail now aspire or sacrifice me
One me vs. all society - mostly all society hates me
But that only I-rates me
Too much time to think
Now I make it stimulate me - invigorate me
One day my grand kids gone thank me
Shhh... Damn... I ain't had nothin' but headaches lately
But shhh for this headache the world gone have to pay me
Ain't no if-and-s-or-"maybe's"
Against all odds
From a child waken up with no father to embrace me
To a man destined to be king long as I lead and pray for safety
Since a kid you could see my ribs
(Born not to make it, but I did)

No matter how much they throw at me I'm gone always keep my head up and slanted 'cause I'm a real one and they hate that... y'all keep up the positive, inspirational, good work y'all make the days easy in this man made hell...

LT This next was attempting to write his mother something from the heart when he ran into the most dreaded obstacle for a writer - writer's block. But then someone stopped by his cell and dropped off a copy of The Beat Within. He was amazed at the poetry and how the youngsters were able to put real life situations in their writing. This inspired him get over his writer's block and create the following poem to his mother, which is excellent as far as we're concerned. He shows his mother how much he loves her while giving her encouragement to push on. And she should be proud to have birthed such a caring man. He's writing from California State Prison in San Diego, CA, and we hope his mother gets to read this because we think it would bring warmth to her heart and put a smile on her face... Thank you for being a good mother...

Dear Beat Within Publications

Just wanted to say thank you for the inspiration and for helping me discover a talent I never knew I had. I sat down to write my mom something for her birthday. Kind of at a lost for words. When someone stopped by my cell and dropped off a copy of your magazine to my cell.

I skimmed through it. Amazed at some of the poems and the way these people were actually able to put real life situations in a poem. Thinking nothing of it, I set out to my task at hand. "Mom's birthday card," and this is what came out. I'd like to share it with you. Thanks again!

Dearest Mom,

I hope and pray this lil' card reaches you in the best of our Lord's tender, loving, care...
I pray that you're ok, and hope this card helps brighten your day.
I love and miss you and wish I could kiss you,
And wish you a happy birthday.
I'm sorry for the hurts and the pains,
For the disappointments and the rains.
Did I mention I got baptized the other day.
I found Jesus, He's the only way.
I know as I grow in His word,
One day I'll be free as a bird.
Though these three years apart may seem like awhile,
I know when its over I'll come home with a smile.
I'll kiss you, hug you, I'll hold you real tight,
Don't worry mom we're gonna be alright.
Although my brother and sister and dad are still mad.
I pray that one day that their hearts will be glad.
You see this short time away is part of gods plan,
To help me grow up and make me a man.
With Lorrie and Lisa both having my baby it's hard to imagine...
Have I gone crazy... so trust and believe God's word is alive.
It's sharp and it's active, I know will survive...

JEREMY TOWNER Like most of us reading this fine publication, Jeremy has been through his share of struggles. But what sets this man aside from most of us is his uncanny ability to attract people to his story. More often than not we hear stories from people who are glorifying their past life, or people who obviously over exaggerate even the slightest detail in their story to make them 'look a little better.' With Jeremy you can get a sense of his honesty even without meeting him. He tells his story as he sees it without any hint of wanting to be betrayed as the baddest criminal, or even the smartest. He humanizes his situation by accepting his mistakes and poking fun at the mistakes people have made towards him in his own life. We really enjoy reading his writing for that reason. This week he hits us with an excerpt from a story and then he gives us wisdom, random wisdom, and a hot topic that will blow your minds away. Whether you're in prison alongside Jeremy or a person in an office calling the shots where Jeremy is located, you can't deny how horrific the last piece is. We think all of you youngsters should read that piece and re-evaluate where your life is heading because with technology mixing in with our society's collective hate for crimes committed by people with not enough money, America is quickly becoming the land of the incarcerated as opposed to the land of the free. And those of us who suffer the most from incarceration should become aware of this before it's too late and you have a 'computer chip' surgically put in your head. And they say they can record your cell phone conversations.... Well get a load of this new information sent to us from a great man residing in Corcoran State Prison in Corcoran, CA.

Second Chance Strike Out

Back again from where I started. A shame some would say, but I had no time to think about my shame. As far as my ego was concerned I've never felt it. Probably never would.

I was in (Santa Cruz County) juvenile hall again this time for a while. I played quiet for a while and stayed out of trouble but all good things come to an end. There's always the tough guy who wants to see your breaking point and if you don't break you become the lame coward. I broke several times but not the way they thought I would.

Instead of fighting with the inmates I would break things or hurt myself. I never wanted to fight anyone but someone always wanted to fight me. So I would do things to avoid them.

It's when you can't avoid it any longer that you take a deep breath and give it your all. But I only got into one fight, I lost and the inmates never let me forget it. But it was one that broke my cowardice. I suppose that's all it takes.

After my fight a group home from San Francisco came to see me. It was the Walden House on Haight Street. The people who came to see me were nice. They always were. So what does that say about me? I know they're nice and yet I can't seem to get the nice thing down. I'm always sarcastic when I say something. I'm rude, annoying, and never funny. But yet I can discern goodness in somebody else. I was selfish.

The juvenile hall wasn't that bad because I started to get a rep to being slightly crazy. Hey whatever keeps up the front works for me.

Every weekend, though, was depressing. Almost all the kids got visits and I was getting irritated with my family. I felt that they didn't care at all because a true family member would visit every week. Not to mention sacrifice everything to keep their kids out of jail. But mine never did. A couple of forced consoling words to pretend that they do care. I was down in the dirt with no one to help me up.

One person cared, I think, and visited me only once. My mother. I was happy at first to see her but when I looked close enough I could see she wasn't doing good things. She didn't care what anyone thought of her and that's a good thing to an extent. It was embarrassing to see her because she was wearing a small shirt and tights.

We had a good visit but when she left the other inmates started whistling. They made remarks that boiled my blood but what would I do? Beat them? Then what? So I let it all go. It's no use fighting fools with no honor and respect. It's like Jesus said, "Forgive them father for they know not what they do." I knew what they did so I didn't do it.

A couple of weeks go by and I'm in my room reading a book I have read twice before when I hear a commotion in the hallway.

Turned out to be a kid was holding one of the female staff hostage because he didn't want to go to CYA. He busted a piece of his window out and put it to her neck. However his follow through with his escape plan was put to a stop quick. One of the staff, who was a professional weight lifter,

just strolled on down the hall and grabbed the wrist of the stupid kid, and tossed him to the floor.

Something as crazy as that quitted within seconds and over. Never spoken of again and life goes on. But it remains in the memories of those who were there. That's not something I like to remember, among other things, but you can't do anything to forget them. It's always there for your use like me telling you about it. Maybe that's a bad thing because now you know. But will you remember? How will you use this knowledge? This lesson is for me I guess because I would never be stupid enough to do something like that. So why am I stupid enough to do other things that are wrong?

A couple of days later the staff told me I was leaving. Every time I heard those words a smile hits my face and relief to my shoulders as if I were Atlas for the day. And with joy I left to seek my new adventure. Like some famous guy said, "When one is on a journey he thinks of home. When one is at home he thinks of the journey." I often thought of home. To go back to the way it was because the way it is wasn't better. But home would have to wait.

I got dressed out at intake into my very old clothes and was met in the parking lot by my driver to my next group home. We get in the car and begin our journey to San Francisco.

I thought about jumping out of the car right then and there before we even got going because the streets were calling to me but I didn't because I was going to be next to them where I was going.

So we drove, in complete silence I might add. There just wasn't anything I could talk about because it's mostly useless knowledge.

So silence encompassed the car except for the dull roar of the engine, the squeak of the brakes and the thumps of the tires rolling over miscellaneous objects stuck to the road.

We got to Frisco eventually and upon seeing the "big orange-red" bridge memories flooded my mind of good times. Then my feet would itch to run but I forced myself to calm.

All in good time if I didn't like the way I was accepted at the group home. All in good time.

The group home itself was huge. It was like a little complex apartment place with the rooms a lot smaller. We parked outside the place and walked through a gate and then the door to the group home where I was greeted with false greetings and smiles that said, "Great another messed up kid to straighten out." But I gave them a smile of my own. One that said, "I know where you can stick your smile."

And with the pleasantries and intros done I was given a tour of the place. They had a library, a sitting room, and a meeting hall with time out rooms in case some one gets mischievous. Then I was shown the kitchen my favorite place. I love food so I was looking forward to some good meals. After the kitchen we went to the courtyard inside the complex where there was the school and a basketball court. They had a weight room too.

And finally my room, which I would share with a very pimply faced seventeen year old kid. Of course I got the top bunk.

Then I was left alone to fend for myself among the other kids. But no one said hello except my roommate and that was all he said. Not bad at all. I might get along here if they don't know me. Sweet.

I found out later that day that we were allowed to smoke but I needed my dad's permission by phone to smoke. It's only three smokes but I didn't care. I only cared what my father would say. I thought he'd say no because when I was at home he caught me stealing smokes from his pack and took it upon himself to actually teach me something for the first time. A contradiction on his part though. He went to the store and bought 2 cartons of smokes then came home and dragged me to the backyard. When he pulled out the cartons I knew it meant trouble.

Maybe he got the idea off the TV and thought it would work because me and my father had a smoke off. A bonding moment between father and son, at the wrong time, but still a bond.

So we smoked. I pretended then to act like I never

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smoked in my life until he told me to knock it off. Little did my father know I was already smoking a pack a day while his pack lasted him a couple. So I eased up on the acting but still humbled myself to his great ability to inhale more crap then he thought I could and eventually when he thought the lesson learned I was sent to my room.

So when I did call my father from the group home and asked him permission to smoke, it came a great surprise when he said yes.

Hmmm. Maybe my dad was all right after all. Maybe we could regroup and try again. He said he would visit on some weekend in the future and we hung up. It turns out that I could actually do this. When I asked how long the program was that last thought was silenced to a muffle. Fourteen to twenty-four months? You have got to be kidding me. That's a big chunk of my life away from my family.

Just when I thought I could go home and fix things soon they tell me this crap. I can't go home at all. All in good time my ass. My feet were itching so bad I needed to scratch. Then I thought of the visit I've never had before. I could wait and see if I can work things out with pops. Then I can be accepted again and maybe he'd see where I was coming from. Maybe.

So I stayed. I got a job in the kitchen, score, washing dishes and I got to be by myself with the kitchen lady, score again, and she let me smoke more than one cigarette. Plus I had the hots for her, which was so juvenile. But I could stare, right?

I went to the school as well. I studied Spanish and math and who gives a damn they had a weight room for a class. I couldn't get in though. Bastards hating on small people. I wanted to beef up but I couldn't even bench my body weight.

Oh well at least I got the kitchen and a visit that would soon come.

I waited for a while but my father never showed. Another promise of broken hope. And all vestige of who I was, was taken by anger. If my dad wouldn't visit and I couldn't go home then I would scratch my feet with the road.

I began to plot my break. I knew it would be cold at night so I would need my blanket and clothes. I collected dry goods and kitchen lady's lighters from work. Then, because I was an asshole I talked another kid into running away with

JEREMY TOWNER (CONT.)

me. The night we were going to leave we decided to go out the front door. When we approached the front door though someone saw us and pleaded with us to stay. They almost groveled. Which made me mad even more because the other guy bought it.

Without him I couldn't run away. So I stayed with him. However I was put in the time out room, which was like a cell. A little twenty-four hour reminder of what will come if I try again. But I scoffed at them. What did they know about my ability to survive? I knew how to stay away from cops. They're the only ones who can arrest you so if you stay away they can't get you. Plus in Frisco, the cops aren't worried about runaways. They get thousands of reports a year. So I wouldn't even be looked for.

Street smarts have a thousand tricks to elude until your forget to elude. So I did my day. I didn't learn anything except to not go out the front door. When my time was up I was put back into my room with a restriction status. But when that was over I went out to look for my road partner. When I found him he said he would still do it. So to stop any second thoughts of not going I decided we'd leave that night by the garage. He was with it.

I then went back to my room and packed what I could find. Then we waited. We said we would meet each other in the hallway at twelve o'clock and then make a scramble for it.

When twelve came by I snuck out of the room without waking my roommate and found my road partner waiting for me. We then proceeded to the Gate that the homes cars come through at night. Creeping ever so quietly from bush to wall we made our way into the street. My heart pounding in my chest we bolted running as fast as we could to reach downtown. Switching streets willy nilly just because we felt to evade our unseen predators. Some how though on this run I felt like I lost. Perhaps I can do nothing else. I could still go back. They don't know I'm gone yet. But no I was committed to myself from here on out and it will stay that way. Finally the itch has been relieved but the consequence will be the scars.

It becomes us to choose for ourselves. But what if we chose for others? The reward would be greater for the heart of man and his divine province.

Random Wisdom

Century by century the human race has taken more of a hold upon this world. Why? Some of us who have explored the world and its beauty wish more and more to create it where as others haven't yet recognized the beauty with which surrounds us and choose to destroy it because of their personal egos. We of the human race have been set upon the higher evolution of the nature of things. We have a greater base of free will and have been instilled with the knowledge of what's right and wrong, free to make our conscience decisions between the two differences that mold our existence. Yet we continue to contradict ourselves with war, greed, capitalism gained by pure selfishness.

So I ask, what the hell is wrong with us?

I'll tell you. Scholars call it human nature. Theosophists call it personal-ego. I call it ignorance, offending this word my seem but since when should truth offend us. It offends because it means we must now recognize our ignorance and change. Our selfishness has become so routine it is a way of life.

So why would God further in trust the beauty of creation into the hands of us?

Wisdom

When darkness falls upon us and our fates seem grim unto death. Then comes the test of our true selves. Every life comes to this crossroad of choice and it is the will of man to choose.

Who are we to disregard such cares as God would see us fit to bear. It becomes us to choose for ourselves. But what if we chose for others? The reward would be greater for the heart of man and his divine province. Why do we struggle? It is because man's imagination is evil from his youth. No fault is ours but the responsibility cannot be ignored.

Only when we choose the right path will the veil fall from our minds and reveal a world of treasure. The richness of wisdom beyond our years and a new life to live with God.

Be true to your heart and hear it. Head the signs of death. Listen to its warnings. Then wise we shall be.

E-MONEY We really miss this next writer's presence in our office as he's been gone for a while now. We first met him in San Francisco Juvenile Hall (YGC) in the max unit where he was fighting a very serious case. He went on to prison and kept writing for us. Over the decade The Beat has been in existence, this man covers almost every era of The Beat. He got out and worked with us for a while before faltering to life's obstacles once again. He's a man of wisdom and intelligence and we truly miss that around the office for the new year. We sort of need his energy. This week he sends us 'a letter to someone special' and lately he's been writing pieces of romance. We guess he's come across a real influential woman because she's been the subject of his writing his last couple of installments. We hope it's something that keeps him driven in a time where forces that drive us have limits. He's writing from San Quentin State Prison in San Quentin, CA. We'll be here for him as much as we can during this most recent set back.

A Letter To Someone Special

After a life time of rain and snow it was like sunshine meeting someone so beautiful such as yourself. I mean I seen the rainbow in your eyes when you smiled and it was like I kissed comfort in the state of loneliness. For the first time in history I seen a star in the day time when I seen you and I knew it had to be an angel close by looking down on me. Heaven has arrived on the foundation of hell bringing with it glory to my soul. Baby you will always have a residence in my heart until this world has rejected its existence. You proved "thought" wrong when it birthed the concept "that special one doesn't exist"

I say all that to say thank you! Thank you for being there at a time I was at my most low. I know for the time being society has abducted the life of a freedom fighter with criminal intent to see the last in a state of oppression trying to murder the current happiness and joy to possess, but

like a test the studying of life has graduated the warrior. Dipped in the thickness of struggle, branded 100% solid front line soldier guarding the entrance of my soul against anyone trying to take my peace away.

Struggle has taught me to smile in the face of pain and sunshine has shown me the beauty in rain. Difficulty is a figment of the imagination. It really doesn't exist. It has to first get permission from the emotional state. How can a heart be stoned cold but still pump blood as thick as coal? I don't blame society for its evil intent, understanding has given me the tool to conquer the element of surprise. Making it apparent in this eye. Neglective to "why?" wisdom has given me the vision to understand life, society and living the day I die.

This devilish world has conditioned the alert a find in the time of hurt. Always easy, never panic. This faith is derived from the lust souls of those of the titanic. Conquering the fear of death make the rest of life dangers nothing more than a normal breath. No sweaty fear is a memory looked upon with shame, bravery will come to know my name. I come from a cloth of stallion. I can't be tamed! The whips of life got me screaming "Eff pain."

Life is a bit more than a fantasy. It doesn't necessarily always draw up the way we depict it. The colors of life is sometimes rearranged to have us living in a state of confusion. Constantly being attacked by "wonder" and it's elements of guessing and uncertainty. Therefore I don't complain I deal with life struggles the best way I know as they come always hoping for better, but if life is designed for me to fight an eternal struggle, I'm looking to score a grade "A" on judgment day.

You young ones truly need to understand California ain't playing!
What you do now will be used against you as an adult!

LIL' LOCO Writing from New Folsom State Prison in Represa, CA, we give you someone who, like most of us, sees the importance of the next generation. However, we're locking our children up and giving them the same kinds of sentences we'd give an adult. Compare the two and let us know who has the invested interest in our future, the ones who are letting our kids know it's not cool to get locked up, or the ones locking us up? We've decided that whatever your perspective, you can't deny this man's courage and wisdom as he extends a compassionate hand to those youngsters who feel like they'll be gambling with the law for many years to come. There are many lessons to learn in this back page and here comes a brand new teacher relaying his experiences and views from the SHU.

Through My Eyes

What's up Beat readers and writers? This is Lil' Loco extending mi saludos your way. Savas que I enjoyed checking out your volume 11.26/27 which I received a month back. This being my first letter at ya', I'm blasting these words from New Folsom State Prison (P.S.U. - S.H.U.). Maybe my words will open a youngstas eyes to crime, drama, and pride.

I'm Latino/White, thirty-four years young, been down eight years and seven to do! You young ones truly need to understand California ain't playing! What you do now will be used against you as an adult! Once you enter the system (prison) besides a constant think pattern it's all about respect! If you're active (a gang member) then comes "drama." Knives will be put into your hands! You'll be sent on missions. Be you succeed then your firme! If you don't,

then you get stabbed and it's always the vato you trust! Be you not active or a raza drop out then you're considered "no good" and are put in "protective custody." Which they place you around vatos that (simply put) is an embarrassment to be around. It's truly sad!

Now comes "pride." If we respect ourselves we have pride. How deep our pride goes only you know, how fake you are others can see, how real you are now that's something that only you feel! To make it simple, don't follow, lead and when you lead, lead yourself to a better life. Find an interest and be all you can be. Make yourself and familia proud. That's "pride!" This is my 2nd prison term and I learned long ago that "best thing in life is to be yourself!"

I write this to you youngstas 'cause I find my crazy self still following this long, lonely traveled road! From age 12 to now I've been state raised, group home material, juvy, CYA, to now prison! But what scares me is my temper which almost got me a 3rd strike in December 2004 for slicing some vato who disrespected me 'cause I'm gay. Now that I'm doing a "30 month - 2 1/2" year SHU. Do I regret it? Of course I do! I sit back and realize I don't want to die in here. I got a whole world ahead of me and when I'm done (my term) I'll have a degree in writing horror scripts, so I will succeed and have more than enough money to help my sisters and brother not to include my investments. Us older vatos depend on you. It's all about you, you're our next generation. Stepping back for now if The Beat so desires I'll be back at y'all? Peace

SLIM If only people knew how compassionate most of us can be, they'd probably shed their old judgments about us. This next writer wrote this poem to his sister when he found out she was going to court. It's an inspirational poem that could apply to all of us if we let it. He's writing from the Telford Unit in New Boston, Texas. Great writing...

Push

When things go wrong as they sometimes will
When the path you're walking seem so up hill
When the funds are low and the depths are high
And sometimes you cry
Rest if you must my ninja
BUT DON'T YOU QUIT.

Dewitt Nelson

This place is stupid. When you come you either come from Preston, YTS, or Paso. First you get off the van. You have to be 18 or older to come here. When you get off the van you go to the Comp. Center and drop off your things that you brought from a different facility. You will get them like four or five days later. Then they take you where you will be strip searched and they take pictures of you for your ID. Your YA # is always the same. Then you go back to the Comp. Center. There you sit for like thirty minutes. Then they give you your ID and send you one by one to a dorm.

There are eight dorms. There you will be put in wing 1. That's where you start for like a week. Sometimes more 'till you get on B Phase. You are on C Phase when you get there. So you have to do good there to move up. You have to not get checks. They are for things you do wrong. Like go out of bounds. That's if you go to a different wing. There are 3 wings and 2 is the best. Each one you start from 1 to 3, to 2.

DJ It is so good to have back our old friend from Santa Clara Juvenile Hall. DJ showed up each and every week from the max unit where he was housed from months pending his case. Anyhow, the Youth Authority is a horrible place to get sent to because before you even get there you hear stories about how bad it is. That's why it's always nice when people are courageous enough to share their experiences with Y-A to us when there. Though some of us don't show it, we really appreciate when you write about things that teach us something. This week DJ hits us with a piece about his experience with Dewitt Nelson (a Y-A institution) that describes his perspective of it. In his letter to us he calls it 'whack.' For those of you who might be going there, you'd probably be curious to read this. And we're publishing it because we hope you do...

All you have to do is stick to yourself and do what you got to do, to get out of this place. It's not bad to program here. There are not that much fights. All the organizations are cool. It's mostly about respect. We got everything from Bulldogs, Northerners, Bloods, Crips and Southerners. Sometimes it pops off but not that often. Mostly everybody is trying to get out.

Well I have to go. Much love.

BYRON This next writer used to be in our workshops at 150 (Alameda County Juvenile Hall) and then he moved on to ROP (Rites Of Passage). Now, he's writing us to let us know what it's like down there. And we're sure those of you readers who might be going there will appreciate what he tells you about it because it sounds like you have to prepare for it. It's difficult sitting in a cell for most of the day in juvenile hall and then going to something as demanding as a boot camp run by people who've been in the army. We're grateful for the information he's given us. Thank you...

Finally Here At ROP

What's up wit' it. Yeap I'm writin' from ROP in San Andreas, CA and it's hella bootsie. But it easy. You just gotta do hella shhh like walk wit yo' hand to yo' side and you can't do nothin' wit' out askin'. I mean from sratchin' yo' nuts to sratchin' yo' nose. Then you gotta run three miles Monday, Wednesday, and Friday the thang about it is you gotta make it twenty four laps in twenty four minutes to get out of Lassen dorm it's the intake dorm. You got to get one-hundred-and-thirty points to get to GP (General Population) 'cause in Lassen you can't do nothin' - no sports, no home passes,

but you gotta get yo' rams to go home and you only go home once a month. But it's three dorms, Lassen the intake dorm which you will be in for six weeks unless you messin' up. Then there's Sierra and Yosemite, but you gotta do 18/20s everyday after school at three o'clock or sometimes in the morning and we gotta be in bed by eight o'clock and wake at six a-m.

18/20s in anything from push ups to jumping jacks, 18 different things but it's hella gang members and shhh that don't know nothin' 'bout this Bay Area life, but it's in the mountains somewhere.

Man, I'm hella far away ninjas ain't really runnin' from here 'cause it's nowhere to run nothin' but hella mountains and trees if you would run it would probably take you 7 or 8 hours 'till you see a highway but the staff be on some BS up here they all from the army and shhh so they got ROP like a army base or something. Shhh, that's how I feel but here you don't get hours you get strikes and if you get three you go to this shhh called Stars its like boys control but all you do is 18/20s all day, but man lights out at eight o'clock so I'm gonna let y'all know what's going on up here at R.O.P.

*I wish these tears would stop or just run dry
But they come from my heart and not from my eyes.*

ANGELIQUE We haven't heard from this next powerful workshop participant out of Santa Clara County Juvenile Hall for a while now. She's moved on to Ventura (the Youth Authority institution for young women) in Camarillo, CA. But her loyalty to this publication hasn't diminished one bit. She hits us with a love poem to a 'lost love.' Probably lost because of her own mistakes, which we hope she's learning from, and usually that's the worst way to lose something - through our own doing because then we beat ourselves up about it. We know she'll overcome what's keeping her away from her loved ones, and when that day comes, we'll all be a little happier.

Lost Love

Last night while lying in bed,
Thoughts of you ran through my head,
Although it's been awhile since I've cried,
Into my pillow fell endless tears.
Tears of your smile I miss,
And the sweet taste of your precious lips I long to kiss
Tears of your "angel face".
The joy you bring, and your gentle embrace.
Tears to be glazing in your big brown eyes.
To be holding you close, and to be by your side.
Tears for the love we should be making now.
And tears (out of regret) of letting you down.
I wish these tears would stop or just run dry
But they come from my heart and not from my eyes.
The pain will only cease when you're near,
Until then I cry these endless tears.

SWORD As we evolve as people, our minds evolve too. Sometimes for better and at other times for worse, but whatever the case there's evolution involved. Some of us evolve faster than others and this next writer is probably pretty fast along the evolution process because this next poem is deep. Not many people can capture as much as he did using such a short amount of words. In fact, in his letter to us he simply states, "once a week I will send you a piece from my soul. Please send me your magazine. Keep doin' what you are doin' Much Respect," and that's it. He's writing from Washington State Reformatory in Monroe, WA, and we respect his approach.

Evolution of Thoughts

Evolution of thoughts well traveled,
To begin a war with loss of the first battle.
Asking for a quick end to all that is known,
Welcoming the pain and solitude that has never left you alone.
Nothing matters but the center of your being.
The evolution of thoughts well traveled is a road seldom seen.
Untold fortune for a scholar of wisdom's
Sorrow and ending of hostilities as you live through tomorrow.
Worrying about today is war enough of its own
The evolution of thoughts well traveled is a seed forever sown.

I was in juvenile hall again this time for a while. I played quiet for a while and stayed out of trouble but all good things come to an end. There's always the tough guy who wants to see your breaking point and if you don't break you become the lame coward. I broke several times but not the way they thought I would.

check out the rest of Jeremy Towner's BWO piece on page 64-54

